

TUSHAR IRANI

## REASON AND VALUE IN PLATO

**Abstract.** I begin with a puzzle. According to some scholars, Plato's view that the forms possess value as objects of desire gives rise to a problem in his metaphysics: how can forms of injustice and ugliness be considered desirable? To resolve this puzzle, I focus on Plato's views on eros and argue that the philosopher's love of forms is best understood as a kind of rational compulsion. Approaching the puzzle from this direction gives us an idea of how Plato's forms might be viewed as value laden. It also suggests an understanding of his metaphysics that's less otherworldly than is often thought.

### I

WHEN THE TIME COMES in book 6 of the *Republic* to spell out the proper functioning of reason, Plato's discussion centers on the philosopher. Here and in book 7, we learn that the proper objects of concern for the rational part of the soul are the forms, and that the proper method of pursuing these objects is through dialectic. But in addition to developing a certain cognitive attitude toward the forms, it's clear from these portions of the dialogue that this requires a certain sort of motivational outlook. We experience the forms on this view, not with a cold and calculating eye, but with smoldering need and desire. The experience is captured in Plato's depiction of the philosopher's love of forms at 490a8–b7:

... it is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle towards being (*to on*) and not to remain with each of the many things that are believed

to be. Rather, in pressing ahead, he neither damps down nor extinguishes his erotic love (*erôtos*) until he grasps the nature of what each thing is itself (*autou ho estin hekastou tês phuseôs*) with that part of the soul that is fitted to lay hold of such a thing and is akin to it. And in so doing, on approaching and commingling with that which really is (*tôi ontî ontôs*), and begetting intelligence (*noun*) and truth (*alêtheian*), he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and thus released from the pains of giving birth, but not before.<sup>1</sup>

Such passages have long presented a puzzle for scholars of Plato's metaphysics. In dialogues such as the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*, Plato typically focuses on those features of the forms that explain their role in human cognition in representing things as they really are (*tên ontôs ousian*, *Sophist* 248a11). Gregory Vlastos describes this sense of "real" in Plato as "that which is cognitively dependable, undeceiving."<sup>2</sup> But the passage above suggests another sense in which Plato depicts the reality of the forms, "which becomes most prominent when he thinks of the 'really real' things, the Forms, as objects of mystical experience" (p. 64). These are the occasions in Plato's dialogues when the forms influence us more deeply than in cognition, under conditions often regarded as otherworldly and under descriptions that rely on imagery rather than argument. In these contexts the word "real" functions as "a value-predicate, but one that transcends the usual specifications of value, moral, aesthetic, and religious; it connotes more than goodness, beauty, or holiness, or even than all three of them in conjunction" (p. 64). Yet speaking of Plato's forms in a value-laden sense gives rise to a problem in his metaphysics that Vlastos regards as "not wholly free from an incoherence" (p. 64).

To see this, consider the forms of injustice and ugliness.<sup>3</sup> Such forms can be straightforwardly understood as real in a cognitive sense: as objects of knowledge and inquiry. But it's less obvious how these forms might be understood as real in Plato's other evaluative sense: as "objects of mystical experience." To resolve this puzzle, I focus in this paper on ourselves as *valuers*—that is, on the way in which Plato believes the forms affect us. My concern in particular is with his conception of rational eros. Approaching Vlastos's puzzle from this direction gives us an idea of how the forms might be viewed as value-laden. It also goes some way toward an understanding of Plato's metaphysics that's less otherworldly and mystical than Vlastos suggests.

According to a standard view, Plato models our desire for the forms on our desire for others—in particular, our sexual desire for others.

Rational eros according to this view is simply a sublimated version of sexual eros. And the imagery Plato invokes to describe this experience, in the *Republic* passage above and in other dialogues, does appear to suggest such a reading. Nevertheless, I shall argue that this conception of rational eros is incomplete. A better model for understanding our desire for the forms is found in Plato's analysis of eros in the *Phaedrus*. Unique among other dialogues is the clear distinction drawn in this work between two kinds of eros, and we can make better sense of the way in which Plato believes reason and passion converge by focusing on the desires he assigns here to the rational part of the soul. According to this view, rational eros is more correctly understood as a kind of rational compulsion: the kind we experience in philosophical inquiry and argument. But to motivate this reading, let us first consider what's wrong with the standard view.

## II

One account of what I've called the "standard view" of Plato's conception of eros has recently been put forward by C. D. C. Reeve.<sup>4</sup> According to this account, all eros is a kind of desire or appetite, "and desire an inanity—an emptiness of either the body (hunger, thirst) or the soul (ignorance). What fills the emptiness is what satisfies the desire, and what fills it most permanently is what provides the most robust and lasting pleasure" (p. 113).<sup>5</sup> Rational eros, no less than other desires, seeks the fulfillment of a lack—it's just that, in this case, the lack resides in the soul and stems from ignorance. What fills this emptiness of soul is knowledge of the forms, in much the same way that bodily hunger finds satisfaction in food. The main difference between rational eros and bodily appetite, according to this reading, is that knowledge of the forms provides stable and lasting satisfaction, whereas the satisfaction of desires such as hunger and thirst remains fleeting.<sup>6</sup>

I do not wish to dispute the claim that all eros is a kind of appetite, for it has good precedent in the Platonic corpus. But even Reeve is quick to recognize that the above conception of eros contains a deep irony: "When an irrefutable account of beauty is augmented or replaced by contemplation of the Form of beauty," he notes, "love is fully satisfied and our emptiness is filled once and for all. This is the first manifestation of the deep problem of Platonic love. We desire only what we do not possess. . . . But the pleasure of complete possession kills desire and with it the incomplete being whose essence it is. Love required is

death" (p. 115). That our love of the forms should meet such a sorry end should give us pause for thought, and indeed there are grounds in the *Phaedrus* to hold that the above account is only a partial one. For while Plato accepts the premise that eros is a kind of desire or appetite in this work, he is careful not to let the matter rest with that claim.

The entire first part of the *Phaedrus* is designed to show that there is much more to eros than simply appetite. Both Lysias's speech (implicitly) and Socrates's first speech (explicitly) feature speakers who view eros as a kind of appetite (*epithumia*, 237d3–4), and on the basis of this principle both seek to denounce erotic lovers. Later on, however, Socrates comes to regret this assessment, and in his second speech he develops a conception of eros that cannot be regarded in terms of appetite alone. In this speech, eros is seen as "something divine" (*ti theion*, 242e2) and erotic lovers are praised. For Plato's fuller account of eros, then, it would be natural to look here.

A further reason to reject an account of eros simply in terms of appetite is that such a view makes it hard to credit Plato's forms with independent value as objects of desire. All erotic attachment stems from emptiness on this reading, and the impact of the forms on our moral psychology consists merely in filling us out; once possessed, our love for them will be quenched. But whatever value we find in such objects seems to depend on their ability to satisfy us, whereas one would think that the forms should retain their value as objects of desire quite apart from any pleasure we derive from them.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that the language of emptiness and possession does not capture all there is to rational eros, and that a different model should be sought for the desire that Plato assigns to reason.

### III

Plato's conception of rational eros is better understood in light of his claim in the *Phaedrus* that eros is a species of madness. We have already noted how he distinguishes between two kinds of eros in this work. The first is wholly without reason (*aneu logou*, 238b7) and viewed in terms of appetite alone. The second, which is the kind he comes to favor, receives a more illustrious description as "the recollection (*anamnêsis*) of those things that our soul once saw when it journeyed with a god, and looked down upon the things we now take to be and lifted up its head into that which really is" (249c1–4). Lines such as these, no doubt, have secured Plato's reputation as something of a supernaturalist. We lead bifurcated

lives according to this interpretation, with the sensible part of us mired in the natural world below and the rational part functioning in some remote realm of incorporeal being: the world of forms.<sup>8</sup> I think this is a poor caricature of Plato's metaphysics, although a full discussion of his theory of forms is not my aim here. What I am interested in is how he conceives of our response to the forms. For the reference to the doctrine of recollection in this passage makes plain that those things beheld by the soul are forms (see 249b6–8). This experience is a kind of inspiration (*enthusiaszôn*, 249d2) but it is also according to Socrates a kind of madness (*manias*, 249d5), and a person who comes to share in this madness (*tautês metechôn tês manias*, 249e3), he maintains, is properly called a lover (*erastês*, 249e4).

Plato conceives of our response to the forms here as manic in some sense, but what's this description of our moral psychology meant to capture? Madness in the *Phaedrus* is best understood in terms of compulsion or loss of self-control. This is a running motif throughout the dialogue, beginning with the myth alluded to at 229b4–5, where Phaedrus asks Socrates whether he believes in the legend of Oreithuia's abduction by the god Boreas.<sup>9</sup> The theme is reinforced when Phaedrus pressures Socrates into making his first speech, at one point threatening him with violence (*bian*, 236d2) before finally compelling him to speak (*anankasô se legein*, 236d7) with an oath. When Socrates subsequently retracts this speech, he asserts that it was composed under duress and goes so far as to disclaim ownership, telling Phaedrus it "was spoken by you through my mouth, bewitched by drugs" (242d11–e1).<sup>10</sup>

This language of compulsion plays an especially important role in the *Phaedrus* in relation to eros. From the start of Lysias's speech, in which eros is denounced, it's the compulsive nature of erotic lovers that he targets in criticism, whereas nonlovers are reputed to behave not from compulsion (*hup' anankês*, 231a4) but from their own free will.<sup>11</sup> Likewise in Socrates's first speech, erotic lovers are censured for being driven by compulsion and frenzy (*hup' anankês te kai oistrou*, 240c7–d1). Yet by the time of Socrates's second speech, the language of compulsion has evolved. He begins this speech by stating that although eros is a kind of madness, not all madness is bad. Rather, "the greatest of good things come to us through madness, when it is conferred with a divine giving" (244a6–8).<sup>12</sup> Such madness may be considered erotic in the highest sense when one locates some trace of beauty in the world in the figure of another person, and becomes intensely compelled (*suntonôs ênankasthai*, 253a1–2) to commune with the forms on account of that person.

I now wish to suggest that what this higher conception of eros serves to capture is the sort of experience we suffer in dialectic. There is reason to suspect this on other grounds, since it's through active struggling (*hamillasthai*, 490a1) rather than passive revelation that the philosopher eventually communes with forms in the *Republic*, which in the context of book 6 signifies the work of dialectic (see 499a4–c5, 511a3–e5).<sup>13</sup> And in the *Phaedrus*, it's by engaging with others in philosophy that we come to experience the forms: this is what distinguishes the genuine erotic lover of Socrates's second speech from the lover of his first speech, for whom others are regarded merely as objects of pleasure. Plato's depiction of this experience now as compelling should lead us to consider what role such compulsion might play in philosophical inquiry and argument.

#### IV

The Greek term that I have translated above as “compulsion” (*anankê*) is most frequently used in its philosophical sense to convey the force of necessity in argument.<sup>14</sup> What this describes, in effect, is a sort of dialectical compulsion. But there are at least two ways in which to understand such compulsion. Consider, first, being subject to a Socratic elenchus. At many places, particularly in Plato's aporetic dialogues, Socrates's interlocutors complain about being pressured into drawing conclusions unwillingly, as if by external force, due to previous concessions they make in argument.<sup>15</sup> This is Callicles's complaint in the *Gorgias*, where he protests the way in which Gorgias was compelled (*anankasthênai*, 482d4) by Socrates earlier in the work to contradict himself. Dialectic is regarded here as a coercive practice—a mode of external compulsion—with Socrates in the figure of a bully, and Callicles goes on to advise Socrates to abandon this practice if he knows what's good for him.<sup>16</sup>

But to the extent that he aims to get his interlocutors to see the truth of things, this isn't a fair characterization of Socratic method. We find a similar assessment of Socrates in the *Protagoras*, where he is charged with indulging in a “love of victory” (*philonikein*, 360e3) in forcing Protagoras to answer his questions. Socrates responds to Protagoras by claiming that his only desire in pursuing such questions is to learn the truth about virtue (360e6–8). Likewise in the *Crito*, he affirms that he has always been the type of person persuaded by the argument that seems best to him on reflection, even when this argument drives him to his death (46b4–c6). If we are to take Socrates at his word in these passages, we should consider his motives in a more charitable light.

I suggest, then, that we think of the compulsion Plato has in mind as a mode of internal compulsion: the sort of experience we suffer in recognizing the beauty of a good argument. Support for this view can be found at the end of the *Symposium*, where Alcibiades in the figure of a jilted lover speaks of having been “struck and bitten by arguments in philosophy (*hupo tôn en philosophiai logôn*” (218a5) in his heart (*kardian*, 218a3) or soul (*psuchên*, 218a4) on account of Socrates.<sup>17</sup> Such arguments, Alcibiades contends, may be considered laughable or useless on a superficial level, but when examined more closely, they are found to be the only ones with any intelligence (*noun*, 222a2).

The experience Alcibiades describes above is not hard to relate to. We speak of arguments as compelling in the sense that they command our admiration and a certain respect: if I accept each step of a good argument, I must accept the conclusion. This can be viewed as a sort of compulsion, but what compels me here is a certain part of myself, which Plato identifies as my reason. Not all compelling arguments are good, of course, but all good arguments are compelling. For the signal feature of such arguments is that they reveal to us the truth of things, which the rational part of us is naturally drawn to.<sup>18</sup> We might accept these arguments reluctantly or decide not to heed them at all; but where there is unwillingness, Plato believes, this is because of prejudices, opinions, or feelings clung to by other parts of ourselves, products of upbringing or habit perhaps, that need to be subjected to critical scrutiny and evaluation. Self-examination of this sort can be painful, as Socrates’s interlocutors usually learn, and as the difficulty of removing deep-seated prejudices often reveals.<sup>19</sup> Philosophy might not be the only way of effecting such change. Yet when applied and taken up with the right motivation, the response that it provokes emerges from within and may be regarded as a mode of internal rather than external compulsion.<sup>20</sup>

## V

We are now in a position to ask which of these two modes of compulsion better expresses the philosopher’s love of forms in book 6 of the *Republic*. On the one hand, Plato’s forms appear to be prime examples of entities that exert an outside influence over us. They are independent objects of inquiry and knowledge, after all, and being led by the forms may be understood in this respect as a kind of external compulsion. And yet the forms also have standing as independent objects of value: they are bearers of beauty and truth, and in this respect we may understand

their influence in the way that a good argument moves us from within. For the compulsion in this case emerges from the rational part of us, which Plato takes to be essentially akin (*sungenei*, 490b4) to the forms.

This suggests a portrait of exhilaration: a feeling of being led ineluctably by something beyond oneself that at the same time reflects the truest part of oneself. And it is this external/internal split, I believe, that leads Plato to classify our response to the forms as a kind of madness in the *Phaedrus*, a response which, in depicting the more conative side of our rational nature, he also views as erotic.<sup>21</sup> Hence, when Socrates looks to summarize his twofold analysis of eros much later on in the dialogue, it's in terms of mental dislocation (*aphron*, 265e4; *paranoias*, 266a2) that he categorizes both the "left-handed" love of his first speech that assimilated eros to appetite and the more rational conception of eros developed in his second speech.<sup>22</sup>

This isn't to say that the philosopher feels conflicted. Again, Plato's account of genuine love in the *Phaedrus* is instructive here. For it's the strangeness of the experience (*atopiai*, 251d8), the feeling of being out of place, that characterizes the lover's encounter with the beloved. The problem is his inability to locate precisely the source of what moves him—in something external or something internal—and the impact that this has on his sense of self. He cannot feel otherwise; but at the same time, he doesn't *want* to feel otherwise. Contrast this with Alcibiades's description of his predicament in the *Symposium*, where he finds himself compelled by Socrates's arguments almost despite himself: "for I know well enough that I'm unable to contradict what he urges it's necessary to do," he maintains, "but whenever I leave him, I succumb to the honors of the many" (216b3–5). Clearly one way in which to distinguish the lover of forms is by his attention to the right sorts of objects. But more important from the standpoint of moral psychology, rational eros involves a completely different affective response on the part of the lover. In seeing things as they really are, the *Phaedrus* describes the philosopher in this respect as both disoriented and at one with himself, held captive yet set free (256b1–3).

Harry Frankfurt has written trenchantly on this issue:

When we accede to being moved by logic or by love, the feeling with which we do so is not ordinarily one of dispirited impotence. On the contrary, we characteristically experience in both cases—whether we are following reason or following our hearts—a sense of liberation and of enhancement. What accounts for this experience? It appears to have its source in the fact that when a person is responding to a perception

of something as rational or as beloved, his relationship tends towards *selflessness*. His attention is not merely concentrated upon the object; it is somehow fixed or seized by the object. The object captivates him. He is guided by its characteristics rather than primarily by his own. Quite commonly, he feels that he is overcome—that his own direction of his thoughts and volitions has been superseded.<sup>23</sup>

On the face of it, this description of being overcome, which Frankfurt terms “volitional necessity,” suggests a loss of self. What the person encounters is something true and real—the kind of event that shakes up one’s worldview. But it’s important to observe the role of the lover’s *assent* here and the fact that he lives a more enriched life in seeing things anew. The experience provides him with a sense of fulfillment, although it’s not just the fulfillment of a lack that he enjoys but the sense of recognizing the worth of something external to him, which he comes to identify with what he most deeply values. In so doing, he becomes more fully himself than at any time previously.

There remains an obvious worry here, however, and Plato sees it. Some compelling arguments can be vicious and have the ability to arouse very immediate feelings of obsession, zeal, and even rage, stirring the soul of an audience in an altogether terrifying way.<sup>24</sup> But the above portrait draws too fine a line between the rational compulsion that motivates the philosopher and the compulsion that may incite other manic behavior. Plato was well aware of this—the sophists and demagogues of his day were simply the spin doctors and propagandists of our own—and it is fitting therefore that he devotes the second part of the *Phaedrus* to a study of the differences between philosophical and merely rhetorical uses of discourse. Significantly, his focus at this point is on the way in which to compose beautiful arguments (*kalôs . . . legein te kai graphein*, 259e2; also see 258d7–11) and the language of compulsion returns, but in relation to the power of argument and discourse as a whole, which Socrates defines as a “leading of the soul” (*psuchagôgia*, 271c10; also see 261a7–8).<sup>25</sup>

Plato’s discussion of this topic in the *Phaedrus* is involved, but for our purposes the key distinction that he draws between philosophy and rhetoric lies in the different responses that these styles of argument elicit from their listeners. In contrast to the power of a rhetorical argument that moves us as if by external force, the power of a philosophical argument is found in its ability to arouse our critical faculties, such that the dialectician is ultimately said to engage in a cultivation rather than an indoctrination of the soul of his interlocutor (276a1–277a4).

What results is a collaborative activity between philosophical partners rather than the unilateral force exerted by the rhetorician. But in order to engage in this activity productively, Plato expects a sort of bilateral compulsion from both partners in their common pursuit of the forms. The motivation, that is to say, must be reciprocal. This may involve struggle and perhaps a certain amount of resolve, yet those who engage in such activity consistently enough for the sake of mutual benefit and learning are said to experience as much happiness (*eudaimonein*, 277a3) as is possible for human beings.

A final worry we may have concerns how this conception of rational eros pertains to our love of others. For we love others, not for the means that they provide in pursuing abstract ideals of beauty and truth, but for the beauty they themselves have as individuals.<sup>26</sup> My focus in this paper has been on understanding the philosopher's love of forms on its own terms, but can the view that I have proposed do justice to this feature of our emotional lives? I think it can, and in this respect it offers a further advance on the standard view of Plato's conception of eros. According to that view, our love of forms should be modeled on our love of others. But this seems to get the order of explanation backwards. We should consider instead how our love of others might be modeled on our love of forms.<sup>27</sup>

On the standard interpretation, all eros is simply desire or appetite and seeks the possession of its object, but a problem with this interpretation, we observed, was that it seemed to deprive the loved object of independent value by confining it to the role of a satisfaction provider: love requited is death. The reading that I've suggested avoids this problem, however, since it no longer locates the value of the loved object in its capacity to fulfill a lack. A beautiful argument may compel us even after we have explored all its intricacies. Similarly, our love of others may remain compelling long after growing accustomed to their presence and the emptiness in us is filled.<sup>28</sup> Love requited need not be death. What we recognize in others once our love is refined is their worth as independent sources of value, with fathomless depths to plumb. That this involves effort on our parts should come as no surprise, since this is the same kind of compulsion that Plato believes we have for the forms. Rational eros, like all love deserving of the name, requires hard work. And in the case of our love of the forms, that is the work of philosophy.

*Versions of this paper were presented at the 2011 annual meeting of the Ancient Philosophy Society and a Central Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association in 2012. I am grateful to my audiences at those meetings and especially my two respondents, Mark Sentesy and Sean Kelsey, for their questions and thought-provoking comments. My thanks also to Richard Kraut and Martha Nussbaum for their valuable input on earlier drafts.*

1. All translations from Plato are my own. References to the Greek are from John Burnet's *Platonis Opera*, vols. 1–4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900–07). When referring to *erôs* and its cognates, I have usually transliterated the Greek or used some variant of “erotic love.”
2. Gregory Vlastos, “Degrees of Reality in Plato,” in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 63–64.
3. As Vlastos notes (p. 64n27), Plato appears to have no qualms about positing such forms in the *Republic* (475e9–476a7). In the *Parmenides*, moreover, Socrates is made to countenance forms of hair, mud, and dirt (130c1–e4).
4. C. D. C. Reeve, *Love's Confusions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).
5. Reeve's study concerns love in all its guises, although his focus here on the *Symposium* makes clear that his topic at this point is Plato's conception of rational eros.
6. Sexual desire provides a powerful metaphor for Plato's conception of eros according to this reading. Reeve makes the parallel explicit later, when he refers to Homer's Calypso as “the closest thing to a Platonic Form, apparently, that a woman could be—a perfect satisfier of male sexual desire” (p. 146).
7. The difference I have in mind here is roughly along the lines of our response to a work of art versus our response to a mouth-watering dessert.
8. John McDowell rejects this conception of reason in “Two Sorts of Naturalism,” originally published in *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory*, edited by Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence, and Warren Quinn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 149–79; reprinted in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 167–97 (see especially pp. 176–77). As he makes clear in a note, his own view is that Plato should not be represented as a supernaturalist about reason in this way. Rather, “Plato is a naturalist of the Aristotelian sort, with a penchant for vividly realized pictorial presentations of his thought” (p. 177n19).
9. Socrates takes care to neither demythologize nor endorse the truth of the story. The truth of the legend does not matter to him; what matters is the truth about himself (230a1–3). This topic in the dialogue is discussed in Charles Griswold's *Self-Knowledge in Plato's "Phaedrus"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).
10. Other depictions of such seizures in the *Phaedrus* are discussed well by Andrea Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 159–62.
11. See also 232a4–5, where nonlovers are described as “masters of themselves,” and 233c1–2, where Lysias's speaker proudly declares that “I won't be overcome by eros, but serve as master of myself.”

12. Socrates's change of mind in this speech has led some scholars to claim that Plato is rancoring here the apparent asceticism of works such as the *Republic*, where the mania of eros is regarded less favorably. (See especially Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986], chapter 7.) I doubt, however, that this signals real reform on Plato's part, for the madness he targets in the *Republic* is the kind associated with brute appetite (see 402e3–403b3) and at this stage in the dialogue he does not have the resources to distinguish such mania from the divine madness of the *Phaedrus* or the philosopher's love of forms at 490a8–b7.

13. Similarly in the cave allegory of book 7, the pain of being dragged from darkness into light serves to depict the process of being compelled through dialectic to see the truth of things.

14. By the time of Aristotle, the term is used explicitly to convey logical necessity: see *Metaphysics* VI, which distinguishes between the sense of *anankê* employed in contexts of violence (*kata to biaion*) and the sense "by which we mean it's not possible to be otherwise" (1026b28).

15. For a recent work that looks to redress this perceived abuse, see John Beversluis's *Cross-Examining Socrates: A Defense of the Interlocutors in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For critical study of the features of the Socratic elenchus itself, see Gregory Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 28–58, and Richard Kraut, "Comments on Gregory Vlastos, 'The Socratic Elenchus,'" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 59–70.

16. Robert Nozick takes exception to such coercive models of philosophy in *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), chapter 1. I have profited greatly here from T. H. Irwin's discussion of this topic and its relation to Socratic method in "Coercion and Objectivity in Plato's Dialectic," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 40 (1986): 49–74.

17. Alcibiades goes on to depict this experience at 218b3–4 as "the madness and bacchic frenzy of philosophy" (*tês philosophou manias te kai bakkheias*). But this should not be identified with the madness that Socrates praises in the *Phaedrus*. Alcibiades is still some way off from feeling that sort of compulsion.

18. This is a point that Irwin (1986) makes in distinguishing between permissible and impermissible cases of compulsion: "In the permissible case you are warning me, reporting how things are, not intervening in them, even though your report may be as effective as an intervention. You tell me about the facts; and the compulsion emerges from them plus my beliefs and desires. If you tell me that there is a wasp on my sandwich, you are reporting; putting a wasp on my sandwich is much more like coercing. The reporting, we might say, has a compelling effect, but only the intervention is coercive" (p. 51).

19. Consider here Socrates's description of his art in the *Theaetetus* as a kind of midwifery, and the pains of labor his interlocutors experience in submitting to him (151a5–b1). Socrates himself claims to be under the influence of some divine compulsion in practicing this art (*maieuesthai me ho theos anankazei*, 150c7–8).

20. Contrast this with Richard Rorty's critique of what he terms Plato's invention of "philosophical thinking" in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), according to which "[p]utatively rational *ananke* is, so to speak, just a sublimated form of brute *bia*" (p. 158). (I take the reference from Irwin [1986], pp. 51–53.) This reading of Plato presumes rational compulsion to be utterly external and imposed from without—by some realm of "non-human reality" (p. 157)—rather than internal in the way that I have suggested. It also depends on attributing metaphysical views to Plato that I believe are exaggerated, for Plato's commitment to truth and the idea of an independent reality can be better understood in terms of, rather than prior to, his reflections on dialectic (see also note 8 above). For the implications of Rorty's wholesale rejection of Platonic realism, see Jaegwon Kim, "Rorty and the Possibility of Philosophy," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 596–97.

21. I take this account of philosophical madness to be largely consonant with the one advanced by G. R. F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's "Phaedrus"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 190–203, who also invokes the language of compulsion (see especially pp. 196–98). The difference between our accounts is that Ferrari considers this response from the perspective of the philosopher's love of others, whereas my focus in this paper is on the philosopher's love of forms.

22. The importance of maintaining a balance between the external and the internal is also a theme with which the *Phaedrus* concludes, when Socrates prays that whatever things he has outside him be friendly to the things within him (279b9–c1).

23. Harry Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," *Synthese* 52 (1982): 267.

24. See, for instance, Socrates's portrayal of Thrasymachus at 267c7–d2, who is described as "clever at angering the many (*orgisai* . . . *pollous*, 267c9) and again, when they have been angered, at charming them with incantations."

25. This topic and its connection with Plato's views on philosophy and rhetoric is explored by Elizabeth Asmis, "Psychagogia in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 11 (1986): 153–72.

26. This is Gregory Vlastos's objection to Platonic love in "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato," *Platonic Studies*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 3–34.

27. Here I follow Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), for whom love is "the general name of the quality of attachment and it is capable of infinite degradation and is the source of our greatest errors; but when it is even partially refined it is the energy and passion of the soul in its search for Good, the force that joins us to Good and joins us to the world through Good" (p. 104).

28. The importance of each citizen's love of others in the *Republic* and its place in Plato's political theory is discussed well by Richard Kraut, "Egoism, Love, and Political Office in Plato," *The Philosophical Review* 82 (1973): 330–44 (especially 336–43).