

Soul-Leading in Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Iconic Character of Being

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ABSTRACT: Since antiquity, scholars have observed a structural tension within Plato's *Phaedrus*. The dialogue demands order in every linguistic composition, yet it presents itself as a disordered composition. Accordingly, one of the key problems of the *Phaedrus* is determining which—if any—aspect of the dialogue can supply a unifying thread for the dialogue's major themes (love, rhetoric, writing, myth, philosophy, etc.). My dissertation argues that “soul-leading” (*psuchagogia*)—a rare and ambiguous term used to define the innate power of words—resolves the dialogue's structural tension. I clarify the conceptual and dramatic features of soul-leading by focusing on the dialogue's uniquely prevalent use of the semantic network of “leading” and “following.” By continuing to foreground the language and drama of leading and following, I offer a new interpretation of the dialogue as a whole: the *Phaedrus* is Plato's articulation of how the soul can be led into communion with reality.

Chapter 1 discusses scholarly disputes about the unity of the *Phaedrus* and proposes that soul-leading adequately satisfies the criteria put forward for what would count as a unifying element. I argue that soul-leading unifies the dialogue both thematically and non-thematically; moreover, soul-leading is a theme capacious enough to account for the other principal contenders for unity put forward.

Chapter 2 develops the ambiguous character of soul-leading by examining how the dialogue showcases dangerous forms thereof. Love and language are dangerous when they lead the soul toward goods which can never truly fulfill it. In order to clarify how love and language can mislead the soul, Socrates develops a set of accounts of how the soul is led, both internally and externally, in the three speeches on love. If the soul is to be led into communion with reality (the proper end of soul-leading), it must be led internally by the right part of the soul and externally by the right object of desire.

Chapter 3 argues that all souls can, in principle, be harmonized and directed in the way that Chapter 2 requires. I show that Plato's view of philosophy is neither elitist (i.e., some are intrinsically incapable of philosophy) nor naively essentialist. All can come into communion with reality because

all are by nature equipped to do so. While Plato recognizes that there are forces which tend to prohibit one from exercising one's capability of being rightly led, none of them are intrinsic to human nature.

Chapter 4 argues that successful soul-leading require neither the leader nor the follower to be already well-disposed to what's ultimate in order for the pair to come to a communion with what's ultimate. Plato's depiction of soul-leading love shows that love can itself promote the formation needed for both leader and follower to come into contact with reality. Love can do so because it is always already bound up reality in its responsiveness to beauty. Beauty itself calls the lover to itself by shining through the beautiful beloved, who acts as a reminder of transcendent Beauty. The lover mediates this same experience for the beloved. Each comes to desire the other as well as Beauty itself.

Chapter 5 argues that the drama of the lovers' formation mythically depicted in the *Palinode* (Chapter 4) is written into the drama of the dialogue as a whole. In the relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus, we see an enactment of love's formative role. Likewise, in the relationship between Phaedrus and Lysias, we see an enactment of the dangerous soul-leading discussed in Chapter 2. My focus on leading and following also allows me to show the thematic significance of the drama's setting.

Chapter 6 articulates the metaphysical conditions under which one can be led into communion with reality. Transcendent Beauty invites us into communion with itself and makes possible our ascent by providing us with divine guides and images which can transport us from our ordinary experiences to the true beings. Beauty accomplishes its work—leading us in a “divine dance” where we follow the gods up to Beauty and back down to each other—through images. When we handle images of reality rightly, they lead our souls into communion with reality. Further, when we have come into communion, we'll be inspired to be co-workers of Beauty's soul-leading work. When we articulate reality in language, we create new images that can serve to lead others toward reality.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction: Soul-Leading and the Unity of the Phaedrus.....	1
§1. The Unity of the Phaedrus: A Statement of the Problem	1
§2. Strategies for Resolving the Unity Problem	6
§2.1. Non-Textual Resolutions to the Phaedrus’s Disunity	6
§2.2. Textual Resolutions to the <i>Phaedrus</i> ’s Disunity	17
§3. Thematic Monism Revisited: Soul-Leading as the Incorporating Theme.....	25
§3.1. Thematic Incorporation	25
§3.2. Soul-Leading as Philosophy’s Outer Disposition	28
§3.3. The Ways By Which the Soul is Led: Love and Language	33
§3.4. Incorporating the Remaining Unifiers	41
§4. Nonthematic Unity	47
§4.1. Verbal Texture: The Semantic Network of <i>Psuchagōgia</i>	47
§4.2. The Structure of the Dialogue Revisited: Plato’s Triptych.....	63
§5. An ‘Agogic’ Itinerary	69
Chapter 2: The Civil War in the Soul: Reality-Resistance and a Crisis of Management	75
§1. Introduction: Desire and the Ends of Soul-Leading.....	75
§2. Civil War Without End?—Anti-erotic Anthropology	86
§2.1. Dramatic Discord	88
§2.2. The Nonlover’s Way of Avoiding Discord in the Soul	92
§2.3. An Anthropology of Psychic Discord: Two Forces in the Soul	96
§3. Why Can’t the Soul Genuinely Commune Without Reason at the Helm?	107
§3.1 The Introduction of Reason and the Transformation of the Two Forces.....	110
§3.2. Path of Despair 1: Decadent Desire—A Love that Kills	120
§3.3. Path of Despair 2: Desiccated Moderation—The Refusal to Love	127
§4. Resistance to Reality Can’t Lead to Fulfillment in Principle	134
§4.1. Reality-Resistant Goods.....	135
§4.2. Reality-Resistance in Love and Language	145
§5. Nourishing Reason—A Genuine Communion?.....	155
Ch. 3: Can All Be Saved? Essential and Inessential Distinctions Among Soul-Types	159
§1. Noble and Ignoble Lies: Is There a “Natural Order of Rank Among Men”?	159
§2. Preliminary Considerations	170

§2.1. Strauss’s Imposed Anthropology.....	170
§2.2. The Case for Essentializing Distinctions in the <i>Phaedrus</i> ’s Myth	180
§3. Distinction 1: The Corrupt vs. the Initiated	184
§3.1 Can the Corrupt Soul Be Healed?	184
§3.2. Digression: The Analogy of the Sun and the Meaning of Corruption.....	189
§3.3. Return: The Healing of the Corrupt Soul	197
§4. Distinction 1, Continued: Humanity, Divinity, Fidelity	202
§4.1. Locating the Source of Human Limitation	202
§4.2. Even the Gods Are Limited? On the Divine Descent	209
§4.3. The Meaning and Possibility of “Perpetual Initiation”	214
§5. Distinction 2: The “Inescapable Law” and the Contingency of Choice.....	216
§5.1. The Nine-Fold Hierarchy: Natures or Starting Points?	216
§5.2. Choice, (Mis)fortune, and Society	220
§5.3. Eschatology and <i>Diagōgia</i>	229
§6. Distinction 3: The God One Follows	237
Ch. 4: The Metaphysical Orientation of Love 1: The Lovers’ Formations	243
§1. Whither Does Love Lead?.....	243
§1.1. Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going.....	243
§1.2. Practical Dimensions of Soul-Leading and the Need for Metaphysical Reorientation	246
§1.3. Argument and Plan.....	252
§2. Soul-Leading Primarily as a Practical Concern.....	254
§2.1. Asmis: Plato’s Reevaluation of Rhetoric as a Certain Soul-Leading	254
§2.2. Moss: Plato’s More Secure Method of Soul-Leading: Rhetoric vs. Interpersonal Love	258
§3. Love’s Contribution to the Formations of the Lovers’ Souls	263
§3.1. Attunement and Reevaluation	263
§3.2. The Lover’s Transformation: Genuine Service	269
§3.3. The Beloved’s Transformation: Return-Love (<i>Anterōs</i>).....	282
§4. Reciprocity, Equality, Convergence in the Lovers’ Relationship	286
§5. Mediation and Receptivity in the <i>Phaedrus</i>	300
§5.1. Mediation as an Implicit Theme	300
§5.2. The Role of Receptivity in the <i>Phaedrus</i> : Plato’s “Anti-Pelagianism”	304
§5.3. Interpersonal Mediation: Plato’s “Anti-Occasionalism”	315

Ch. 5: The Metaphysical Orientation of Love 2: Love in the Drama.....	324
§1. Preliminary Considerations	324
§2. Love’s Ambiguity in the Dramatic Scenery.....	331
§2.1. Boreas Reevaluated.....	333
§2.2. The Grove’s Two Trees	339
§3. Love’s Ambiguous Effects on Phaedrus.....	346
§4. Love’s Ambiguous Effects on Socrates	360
Ch. 6: Beauty and the Metaphysics of Communion.....	373
§1. Introduction.....	373
§2. Ontology of the Image.....	376
§2.1. General Features of Images.....	376
§2.2. The Palinode as an Image	385
§2.3. Resolving Ambiguity: Different Modes of Seeing Images	390
§2.4. Icons, Idols, Prisms	402
§3. The Metaphysics of Beauty and Communion with Reality.....	406
§3.1. Beauty’s Descent	407
§3.2. Bridging the Gap	423
§3.3. Beauty and the Good.....	428
§4. Writing and Cooperative Descent	433
§4.1. Transition: Writing as a Locus of Cooperative Descent.....	433
§4.2. Socrates’s Critique of Writing: Paradox, Irony, and Motives	435
§4.3. Can Language Express Being?.....	448
§4.4. Writing as Iconic Image: Co-Manifestation and Cooperative Descent	458
Appendix: ‘Agogic’ Language in the <i>Phaedrus</i>	468
Bibliography.....	479

Chapter 1: Introduction: Soul-Leading and the Unity of the Phaedrus

“Let us first set forth the ‘material’ aspect of the dialogue and its ostensible theme, for that will lend us a hand when it comes to the more theoretical interpretation of the dialogue and its real objective. [...] Some say it is about love [...]. Others think that it is about rhetoric [...]. Then there are those who advocate various other objectives. [...] All of these people have seized on certain parts of the content of the dialogue and declared that the objective concerns them. But there must be a single objective throughout and everything else must be included for its sake, so that, as in a living being, everything may be subordinated to the one whole.”

—Hermias, *Scholia on Plato’s Phaedrus*, 1.11-13, 9.13-10.9¹

§1. The Unity of the Phaedrus: A Statement of the Problem

1. When addressing the question of why Plato chose to write solely in the dialogue form, the 6th century Neoplatonist author of the unsigned *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* claims that Plato writes “in imitation, then, of God’s creation,” for “the dialogue is a kind of cosmos” and “the cosmos is a kind of dialogue.”² The analogy between the divinely-created cosmos and the daimonically-authored dialogue follows, according to the anonym, from the fact that dialogues contain the same “elements” that structure the cosmos: matter, form, nature, soul, intellect, and divinity.³ The anonym grounds his judgment in the following remark from Plato’s *Phaedrus*:

“Every speech (*logon*) like a living creature (*zōon*) should be put together with its own body so that it is not without a head or without a foot but has a middle and extremities, written in such a way that its parts fit together and form a whole.” (264c)⁴

¹ Unless otherwise specified, citations from *Hermias’s* Commentary come from the partial translation of Dirk Baltzly and Michael Share, *Hermias, On Plato: Phaedrus 227A-245E* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). Here, I’ve omitted the translators’ insertions.

² Anonymous, *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, ed. and trans. L. G. Westerink (Wiltshire, UK: The Prometheus Trust, 2011), IV.15.1-7.

³ *Ibid.*, V.16.1-6. The anonym goes on to explain these parallels throughout section V.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the *Phaedrus* will come from Stephen Scully’s translation (*Plato’s Phaedrus* [Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library 2003]). All Platonic texts other than the *Phaedrus* will be cited in-line by Stephanus number and title; the *Phaedrus* will be cited in-line by Stephanus number alone unless context requires specification. In general, I will modify translations in order to highlight “leading” and “following” languages when the translations opt for other possibilities; other modifications will be noted parenthetically.

This remark, made by Socrates near the three-quarter mark of the dialogue, is used to criticize Lysias's speech (*logos*), recited by Phaedrus near the beginning of the dialogue. Socrates compares the speech to an epigram recorded on Midas's tomb; the four lines inscribed thereupon can be read in any order without altering their meaning. Lysias's speech, we are to understand, has no governing principle, no ordering "head" under which the torso and appendages of the speech are naturally, organically subordinated. Rather, it tediously plods on, a mere list of disconnected, somewhat repetitious reasons ordered toward a morally fraught aim (cf. 235a, 264b).⁵ The anonym, supposing (as many modern commentators are wont to do) that Socrates's comments here provide a window into Plato's own views about composition,⁶ concludes from this text that Plato chose to write in the dialogue form since

"a *logos* is analogous to a living being; accordingly the most beautiful *logos* is analogous to the most beautiful of the living beings. But the most beautiful living thing is the cosmos [cf. *Timaeus* 92c]; to this, then, the dialogue is analogous. [...] The dialogue (*dialogos*), therefore, is the most beautiful *logos*."⁷

The anonym invites us, then, to see the Platonic dialogues as beautiful tapestries replete with all of the elements that make up the very cosmos itself, inferior only to the very cosmos itself since the cosmos was crafted by a divine craftsman (cf. *Timaeus* 28a-c, 30b), whereas the Platonic dialogue was crafted by a human being (however divine and "Apollonian" he may be).⁸

⁵ On the "tedium" built into Lysias's speech by the use of "colorless" and "drab" connectives, see Harvey Yunis, *Plato: Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 99, note to 231a7.

⁶ For example, see Reginald Hackforth's remark to this effect in his influential translation and commentary (*Plato's Phaedrus* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1952]): "it will be obvious to anyone who reads these pages with perception that Plato is concerned to state and defend his own position in the matter of authorship" (162).

⁷ *Prolegomena*, IV.15.13-17; my translation. *Timaeus* also claims, and Socrates enthusiastically agrees, that the visible cosmos is an image (*eikona*) of intelligible reality (see *Timaeus* 29b-d). We will discuss the place of images in the metaphysical vision of the *Phaedrus* in Ch. 6. On the role of images in Plato generally, see especially Jill Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy: Literary Device and Dramatic Structure in Plato's Dialogues* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), ch. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I.1.20. The ancient Platonic tradition frequently associates Plato with Apollo.

2. Magnificent as the anonym's understanding of Platonic composition is, the reader of Plato's *Phaedrus*, the very dialogue to which the anonym points for evidence for his claims, is immediately struck by the fact that the *Phaedrus* seems perhaps least qualified of all of Plato's dialogues to be dubbed a "cosmos." A *kosmos* (a noun related to the verb *kosmein*, to order, to adorn) is an ordered, decorated, and beautiful *whole*. But the *Phaedrus* presents itself, at first glance at least, as a *disordered* heap, an accidental unity with no governing thematic "head" under which the various parts are subordinate.⁹

3. The dialogue seems to be divided not straight down the middle, but somewhat off-center, as if the dialogue's composition-process were correlate to the way in which a "bad butcher" might hack through a carcass irrespective of its natural joints (cf. 265e).¹⁰ The first "half" (which takes up not the expected 50% of the dialogue but somewhere closer to 58%) consists of three light-hearted dramatic scenes interspersed by three speeches about love (*erōs*).¹¹ Standing out amidst the "first half" is the Palinode, Socrates's retraction-speech in praise of Love, which itself makes up just over a quarter of the whole dialogue. The Palinode

⁹ Daniel Werner captures the point well: "With all of this thematic, stylistic, and structural diversity, the question naturally arises: just what is it that holds the *Phaedrus* together? Is this dialogue merely a hotchpotch of various ideas and themes, or is there some overriding concern or issue that binds it all together?" "Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Problem of Unity," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 32 (2007), 92.

¹⁰ For the way in which the dialogue could be taken to give an expectation of a clean, symmetrical division around the dialogue's midpoint, see 265e-266a, wherein Socrates analogizes the division of two speeches on love to bisecting a body into pairs of appendages with the same names. Given that Socrates elsewhere in the *Phaedrus* divides in a way other than bisection (divine mania is divided into four species; 265b), we should not presume that division must always work through symmetrical bisection.

¹¹ I calculate 58% (a loose approximation) by dividing the number of Stephanus pages between the dialogue's opening and the Palinode's closing (257-227=30) by the total number of Stephanus pages (279-227=52) of the dialogue. When commentators speak of the "first half," they tend to include the prologue, the three speeches on love, and the two dramatic interludes that happen between the love-speeches (227a-257b). A third dramatic interlude, in which Socrates brings up a myth about the Cicadas in order to guide them in their future conversation about rhetoric and writing (257b-259e) is often included in the "second half," but its tone is more akin to the three prior dramatic scenes than to the tone of most of the remainder of the dialogue. Incorporating the third interlude in the prior calculation would suggest that the first "half" is closer to 61% of the whole dialogue.

tends to be the most memorable, awe-inspiring part of the *Phaedrus*, and the shift from the Palinode's soaring rhetoric and breath-taking imagery to the comparatively dry and technical discussion of the norms of good speaking and writing strikes many readers as a big let-down. The dialogue's "second half" largely ignores (or perhaps "abandons") love,¹² the theme of the first half of the dialogue, in favor of rhetoric and writing, and the shift of discussion-themes is jarring, as James Kasteley has well described:

"Something should follow from or because of [the Palinode]. When it does not, a dissonance occurs. The dialogue has not prepared the reader for the shift that does occur when Phaedrus's banality takes the conversation in a different direction. The shift in direction does not feel simply like a move to a new topic that can be understood as a possible or probable turn in the discourse; rather, the change feels like an unmotivated abandonment of the dialogue's central concern."¹³

Why shift tone and focus so abruptly?

4. On a first pass, there doesn't seem to be a good *philosophical* reason to have switched themes. Rather, the dialogue does so, it seems, just because Phaedrus appears to be, as Drew Hyland notes, "stunningly—one might say appallingly—unmoved by [the Palinode's] content."¹⁴ The dialogue makes it clear early on that Phaedrus is very much a lover of speeches. Socrates claims that no one has caused more speeches to come to be than Phaedrus (242a-b; cf. 243b). Yet Phaedrus's interest in speeches seems to be restricted to their formal qualities rather than their ideas (cf. 234c-235b, 257c); he's interested in rhetorical power rather than truth (268a). G. R. F. Ferrari has aptly described Phaedrus as a kind of intellectual "impresario," someone interested in eliciting pleasurable talk for talk's sake, regardless of the

¹² Cf., e.g., James Kasteley, "Respecting the Rupture: Not Solving the Problem of Unity in Plato's 'Phaedrus,'" *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2002), 139.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 147; cf. G.R.F. Ferrari, "The Unity of the 'Phaedrus': A Response," *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review*, Vol. 1 (1994), 21. Ferrari argues, however, that our sense of being let-down after the Palinode is an anachronism on account of the contemporary reader's different relation to the situation of early Greek rhetoric (22). See Werner's discussion of the point in "Problem of Unity," 127.

¹⁴ Drew Hyland, *Plato and the Question of Beauty* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 115.

intellectual content of the talk (cf. 258e).¹⁵ Phaedrus suffers from a “serious limitation” both intellectually and erotically, as Kasteley claims. “Because he does not feel a certain desire, he mishears or fails to respond to an erotic rhetoric. He can hear an erotically urgent philosophical rhetoric only as entertainment.”¹⁶ Recognizing Phaedrus’s failure, Socrates moves on to a different approach, and that’s that.¹⁷

5. The dialogue seems, then, to be unclear about its topic: are we discussing love, or are we discussing rhetoric? Was there any good reason to switch from a thematic discussion of love to a thematic discussion of rhetoric, or does the dialogue do so simply on account of Phaedrus’s surprising unsuitability for a discussion of love-matters? The question becomes all the more urgent for the dialogue’s philosophically-inclined readers, for its connection of the two primary themes, love and language, suggests that those two themes are somehow philosophically interconnected. In other words, resolving the unity problem potentially bears philosophical fruit in addition to literary insight. Yet the dialogue does not seem to give us a clear indication of whether or how love and language could be relevant to each other philosophically. We are left, instead, with a paradox: Plato embeds his strongest statement on the norms for beautiful composition in his apparently most haphazard dialogue, a dialogue which seems utterly to fail to meet the norms it itself lays out. Why compose a dialogue with two distinct, seemingly disparate “heads” in a dialogue that claims that every *logos* should have a single “head” which unifies the whole body? This paradox is what others have called “the

¹⁵ See Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4-9.

¹⁶ Kasteley, “Respecting the Rupture,” 148.

¹⁷ David Schenker, “The Strangeness of the *Phaedrus*,” *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 127, No. 1 (2006) likewise sees the dialogue’s structure as organized around Phaedrus’s character and Phaedrus’s failure to be convinced by the Palinode; see especially 83-84. By contrast, R. P. Winnington-Ingram, “The Unity of the *Phaedrus*,” *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review*, Vol. 1 (1994), 19 suggests that though the dialogue is one that’s crafted for a complex soul in a complex style (cf. 277b-c), the complex soul in question is Plato’s own, not Phaedrus’s, for “Phaedrus is a dramatic convenience, little more.”

problem of the unity of Plato's *Phaedrus*" (or, more briefly, the "unity problem"). Scholars have long tried to find satisfactory accounts of the dialogue that clarify this paradox written into the very structure of the dialogue (a dialogue which compounds its paradoxicality by proceeding thereafter to criticize writing *in writing*, as we'll discuss in Ch. 6). In what follows, we will first consider different approaches (textual, non-textual) to "the unity problem" (§2) before proceeding to my own proposal and the reasons I will give for it (§3-4). Following that, I will outline the larger argument I plan to make over the course of this work, an argument which, if successful, will shed further light on my proposal (§5).

§2. Strategies for Resolving the Unity Problem

§2.1. Non-Textual Resolutions to the Phaedrus's Disunity

1. There are a number of external, non-textual considerations which have been proffered as solutions to this paradox. First, it is well-known that many of Plato's characters are drawn directly from actual historical personages; generally, Plato's characterization of those personages seems to reflect their own histories, and it is reasonable that Plato should do so, for his immediate audience would be deeply familiar with the characters and events to which Plato alludes. Accordingly, one might suspect that Plato's literary portrayal of Phaedrus reflects the historical Phaedrus, someone who, in Plato's day, would be well-known and well-remembered as a promising young man who participated in religious sacrilege and was consequently exiled in 415, only to die relatively young in 393. But there are two questions to consider here. First, does Plato rigorously stick to historical details in his depictions of characters, locales, and events? Despite the faithfulness that characterizes Platonic portraiture, there seems to be no reason to think that Plato stuck rigorously to the historical record, and

even ancient commentators did not take him to do so.¹⁸ Second, and more importantly, even supposing that Plato *did* stick rigorously to historical details, we should then ask *why* write a dialogue about *Phaedrus* in the first place if Phaedrus is as unphilosophical as he is often taken to be?¹⁹ Plato could have easily chosen a different interlocutor to lead Socrates down to the Ilissos, and so it seems more plausible that if Plato is depicting Phaedrus with historical accuracy (assuming, that is, that our initial impressions have rightly assessed his character—something disputed in the scholarship), he’s doing so for a good reason, a reason which, perhaps, does not immediately present itself to us.²⁰

2. Second (and more commonly), one might suspect that some facet of Plato’s own biography explains why the dialogue seems to be so poorly composed.²¹ The Imperial Platonist biographer Diogenes Laertius reports “a story that the *Phaedrus* was his first dialogue. For the subject has about it something of the freshness of youth.”²² Likewise, Friedrich

¹⁸ Though the dialogues deal with real people and real events (most notably, the symposium after Agathon’s victory at the Lenaia in 416, which is the setting for Plato’s *Symposium*, and Socrates’s trial and defense in 399, which is the setting for Plato’s *Apology*), practically no one takes the dialogues to be verbatim “transcripts” of historical events. See *Prolegomena*, V.16.27-34.

¹⁹ Cf. Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 67. We will consider Phaedrus’s character more directly in Ch. 5.

²⁰ As Gordon notes in her study of literary features utilized in the dialogues, Plato often puts Socrates in conversation with interlocutors whose names are significant insofar as they reveal something about the interlocutor’s character or bear some relation to a given dialogue’s major theme (see, e.g., *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 72); here we might note that Phaedrus’s name, which comes from the verb *phainō*, to appear, means “bright.” As we’ll go on to discuss, the brightness of Beauty is central to the dialogue’s philosophical vision, and this brightness is reflected in Phaedrus himself (see Ch. 5 for a discussion of Phaedrus’s character and his place in the dialogue’s drama; see Ch. 6 for a discussion of the significance of Beauty’s brightness). In any event, what’s more decisive for the relevance of Phaedrus himself to the dialogue is his character *internal* to the dialogue rather than any external considerations about the historical Phaedrus (though such considerations would certainly inform our view of the dramatic Phaedrus’s character).

²¹ Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 66.

²² Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers: Volume I: Books 1-5*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), III.38. The anonymous *Prolegomena* concurs that the *Phaedrus* was Plato’s first dialogue, though the reason is different (rather than being a judgment about the immaturity of the work, the anonym see the point as a logical matter: how can one have already written books if one has only just now “made up his mind whether to write or not”?); see I.3.1-2, X.24.6-8.

Schleiermacher, the 19th century founder of modern Platonic scholarship and hermeneutics, judges the *Phaedrus* to be a work of Plato's immaturity for it is driven primarily by a "philosophical impulse [...] far more intimate and powerful than that of the philosophical matter, which therefore only appears mythically, as if [...] it were still unripe for logical exposition."²³ Diogenes and Schleiermacher concur, then, in suggesting that the dialogue is a product of Plato's youth, reflective of an as yet unmastered literary craft and/or an as yet unformulated philosophical insight; accordingly, he may have come to certain key propositions concerning norms of composition but had yet to discern how to put them effectively in practice. An analogous argument has been given from the putative "senile impotence" of the author in old age.²⁴ Contemporary studies of the compositional chronology of Plato's dialogues supports neither a very early nor a very late composition date (the consensus view seems to be that the *Phaedrus* ought to be placed in the transitional period between Plato's so-called "Middle" and "Late" periods, sometime around the 360s BC.²⁵ Plato would have been about 67 in 360, and he lived for another 13 years).

²³ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato*, trans. William Dobson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1836), 59. David White comments that though Schleiermacher's judgment about the primacy of the *Phaedrus* in terms of compositional chronology is no longer met with any credence, there is a sense in which it continues to work well as a "first" dialogue because it "project[s] the fundamental Platonic questions" and "shines its many rays throughout Plato's early, middle, and late dialogues" (*Rhetoric and Reality in Plato's Phaedrus* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993], 1-2). W. C. Helmbold and W. B. Holther discuss similar claims in "The Unity of the 'Phaedrus,'" *University of California Publications in Classical Philology*, Vol. 14 (1952), 388. The *Phaedrus* is, we could say, a thematic gravitational center of the entire corpus.

²⁴ Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," 67. Derrida quotes H. Raeder, *Platons philosophische Entwicklung* [= *Plato's Philosophical Development*] (Leipzig, 1905) as an example of this style of argument.

²⁵ Cf. Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 23. Though the scholarly consensus now argues that the *Phaedrus* is a Middle-Late transitional dialogue, modern scholars have assigned it to every period of Plato's putative intellectual development, as Anna Usacheva notes ("Concerning the Date of Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Hermathena*, no. 189 [2010], 53). Usacheva also notes that some scholars have taken the *Phaedrus's* parts to have been written at different dates before and after Plato underwent landmark intellectual development (ibid) and ultimately argues for a similar conception, following Holger Thesleff's suggestion that the *Phaedrus* was originally written in the 380s and then substantially revised in the 360s (55).

3. Third (a subspecification of the prior point), one might suspect that the *Phaedrus*'s disunified, seemingly haphazard structure is explainable in terms of Plato's intellectual *development*. Ever since the program was inaugurated in the 19th century under the aegis of the new, historical-critical approach to classical texts, it has become a commonplace to assume that an overview of Plato's intellectual development is the key to understanding Plato's dialogues, both individually and as a corpus.²⁶ According to the developmentalist hermeneutic, Plato's long philosophical career can be broken (relatively) cleanly into three major periods (Early, Middle, and Late); discerning where a dialogue fits in Plato's "compositional chronology" is taken to be crucial for understanding its claims and function.

4. In their introduction to what's probably the most widely read translation of the *Phaedrus* in English, Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff argue along developmentalist lines that the *Phaedrus*, a Middle-Late transitional dialogue, is Plato's way of signaling that he's moving on from his Middle period. For Nehamas and Woodruff, the *Phaedrus* is Plato's anticipation of the *Parmenides*'s "attack" on the theory of forms;²⁷ the *Phaedrus* is Plato's gentle review of the Middle-period theory of forms (expressed mythically in the *Palinode*) about to be rejected in the dialogue's more methodological second half. "We have good reason to think

²⁶ The historical development of the 19th century developmentalist hermeneutic has been well-articulated by Alan Bowen in "On Interpreting Plato," *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, ed. Charles Griswold (New York: Routledge, 1988). Bowen's thesis is that much of the scholarship allegiant to (or, at least, inspired by) the developmentalist hermeneutic "consists only in the blind application of clever answers to a bad question" (51). See also Lloyd Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 34ff. for how 19th century scholars redefined Plato scholarship and interpretation by rejecting the hermeneutical assumptions of their pre-19th century forebears.

²⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995), xlv. Nehamas's and Woodruff's translation is also included in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997). It has become relatively standard to see the early part of the *Parmenides* as an attack on Plato's theory of forms, levied after Plato himself had become disillusioned with the theory. However, a number of scholars have articulated alternative interpretations of the *Parmenides*, some of which strongly reject the "attack" reading. See, e.g., Eric Perl, "Sense-Perception and Intellect in Plato," *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1997), 27-29.

that by the time he wrote the *Phaedrus*, Plato no longer accepted the theory of Forms as it is presented in the Great Speech [= the Palinode].²⁸ Accordingly, Plato's use of the Middle-period theory of Forms in the *Phaedrus* has the character of a mere means to some other goal (awakening the reader to philosophy, despite the falsity of the view which does the awakening) rather than the character of an end (i.e., a positive teaching onto which the reader can hold).²⁹ If indeed Plato has changed his mind about the Middle-period theory of Forms, and if indeed the *Phaedrus* is written to *signal* that change in the *mens auctoris*, then we can, as Nehamas and Woodruff suggest, "read Socrates' Great Speech as Plato's farewell to the theory of Forms it describes."³⁰

5. If Nehamas and Woodruff are correct about Plato's intentions while composing the dialogue, then they will have presented a satisfactory case for why the dialogue should come across as disunified: it is intentionally disunified because the first half of the dialogue is a fond recollection of a by-gone age, whereas the second half showcases a new Plato ready to get to work rethinking his own philosophical foundations. But, if it turns out that this placement of the *Phaedrus* within Plato's compositional chronology is wrong (i.e., if the *Phaedrus* can be securely placed as an Early or true Middle dialogue rather than as a transitional or Late dialogue) or, more broadly, if it turns out that Nehamas's and Woodruff's reliance on the developmentalist hermeneutic for interpreting the disorder of the *Phaedrus* is misguided, then

²⁸ Ibid., xlii. Nehamas and Woodruff also suggest that the seriousness of the Palinode is undercut by the fact that it is addressed to Phaedrus, who has a complex, multicolored, internally inconsistent soul (cf. xli).

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, xliv-xlv.

³⁰ Ibid., xlv. Plato, they claim, is leaving the Palinode behind as a record of what brought him to his own current philosophical position and way of life. It seems strange to suggest that one would express that gratitude by presenting a lionizing portrait of that which one had come to recognize as false. The strangeness of that suggestion is only magnified by the fact that the presentation thereof, which takes up the central third of the whole work, is not unambiguously rejected in what follows, as we'll go on to discuss.

we are left with the problem as originally stated: the dialogue *demands* organic order and yet *refuses* to give a clear indication of what that order is.

6. While there isn't space to directly argue against Nehamas and Woodruff here, I claim that their proposal and others like it which account for the specific character of the *Phaedrus* by reference to Plato's putative intellectual development is basically misguided, for the developmentalist hermeneutic upon which such accounts rely is unreliable, as many commentators have argued over the past few decades.³¹ Fleshing out such arguments in detail here is beyond the scope of this project, but a few notes should suffice to motivate my claim that we must look to the text itself as an intentional and well-crafted whole for a resolution to the unity problem; readers already inclined to agree are invited to jump forward to §2.2.

7. The key feature of the developmentalist hermeneutic seems to be its insistence that a recognition of the author's development is a *necessary* condition for evaluating that author's work. While there's no disputing that information about the author's biography and cultural milieu can be a great boon to our study of the author in question, it is not *necessary* to possess an author's compositional chronology in order to "even make a beginning" in our study, as for example, A. E. Taylor supposes.³² We are, after all, primarily interested in the text's *meaningfulness* rather than its *genesis*. Developmentalism as a basic hermeneutical option seems

³¹ See especially Jacob Howland, "Re-Reading Plato: The Problem of Platonic Chronology," *Phoenix*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (1991). More recently, Catherine Zuckert (*Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009]), Christopher Rowe (*Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010]), and William Altman (*The Guardians in Action: Plato the Teacher and the Post-Republic Dialogues from Timaeus to Theaetetus* [New York: Lexington Books, 2016]) have argued in a similar vein in their respective introductions. On similar points, many of the essays in Griswold's *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* (1988) remain valuable; see also Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 3-7. Likewise, one should consult the argument developed by Richard McDonough, "Referential Opacity and Hermeneutics in Plato's Dialogue Form," *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2013).

³² See, e.g., the remark from A.E. Taylor quoted in Howland, "Re-Reading Plato," 197.

to be wedded to a kind of psychologism. Developmentalist hermeneutics tends to reduce a text's *meaning* to contingent features of the author's mind, such as the author's intentions or the external features influencing the author's disposition.³³ It is not necessary that the claims made by a text are claims an author would make. It's plausible that Plato would have crafted some of his texts in order to "test" or "spur" his students;³⁴ alternatively, an author may be unconscious of the array of meanings a given text may have.³⁵ The text's meaning (or meanings) is irreducible to those contingent features, as hermeneutical theorists have demonstrated.³⁶ Instead, the Platonic text "grows with its readings."³⁷ The dialogue's meaning (or meanings) may continue to unfold as it is read and reread.

8. In addition to a tendency toward psychologism, developmentalism is also historically tied to assumptions about what philosophy *ought* to be, assumptions which don't always correspond to ancient assumptions about philosophy generally, let alone Platonic assumptions.³⁸ Ancient philosophical texts are frequently occasional (i.e., they are produced

³³ Bowen argues that developmentalist accounts have a tendency to reduce philosophical achievements to personality, milieu, or other extrinsic factors. Cf. Bowen, "On Interpreting Plato," 53. Martha Nussbaum's influential interpretation of the *Phaedrus* (see *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001], Ch. 7) falls prey to such a psychologism, for her interpretation hinges on Plato's putative love for Dion, his Sicilian friend who played a crucial role in Plato's Syracusan expeditions as discussed in the *Letters*.

³⁴ Cf. Rosemary Desjardins, "Why Dialogues? Plato's Serious Play," in *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, 112. Altman has developed a corpus-wide hermeneutic wherein the "post-Republic" dialogues in the "reading order" he has composed function to test readers' fidelity to the *Republic's* revelations. The *Seventh Letter* also speaks of arduous tests for would-be disciples (see 340bff.).

³⁵ This is a key feature of Derrida's interpretation in "Plato's Pharmacy."

³⁶ Cf., e.g., Gadamer "Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics," *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard Palmer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 57, Bowen, "On Interpreting Plato," 60, 63, and McDonough, "Referential Opacity," 255ff. See also Gordon's application of reader-response theory to the Platonic dialogues in her "phenomenology of reading the dialogues" in *Turning Toward Philosophy*, ch. 2.

³⁷ Here I'm adapting a remark from Gregory the Great: "Scripture grows with its readings" (*Scriptura cum legitibus crescit*); *Homilies on the Book of Ezekiel the Prophet*, Book I, Homily VII.

³⁸ See especially the introduction to Pierre Hadot's *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

for *this* occasion, in response to *this* stimulus, with *this* set of goals in mind)³⁹ rather than systematic, to the annoyance and chagrin of those steeped in 19th century assumptions, for whom “philosophy as rational thought is by its nature systematic.”⁴⁰ It may be argued that one needn’t retain assumptions peculiar to the 19th century in order to utilize the developmentalist hermeneutic, but one would have to reground it before continuing to rely on the hermeneutic.⁴¹

9. It is also important to recognize that one’s assessment of a developmentalist *hermeneutic* is logically distinct from one’s assessment of an author’s putative intellectual development. One could reject the validity or usefulness of a developmentalist hermeneutic while still acknowledging that an author underwent serious intellectual development. The presence of authorial development need not imply the soundness of a developmentalist hermeneutic, for it is always possible that an author’s development is not one of changing from one position to another but instead one of *deepening* one’s engagement with one’s original position.⁴² Likewise, the possibility that an author who had undergone significant development could have revised her earlier writings suggests that intellectual development even in the sense of changing one’s mind need not warrant a developmentalist hermeneutic, since it’s possible (if we have evidence or testimony of revision) that all of the products available to us are

³⁹ Cf. Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 80-81; Harold Tarrant, *Plato’s First Interpreters*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 73; Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 104-105; Lawrence Hatab, “Writing Knowledge in the Soul: Orality, Literacy, and Plato’s Critique of Poetry,” *Epoché*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2007), 326.

⁴⁰ Bowen, “On Interpreting Plato,” 50. Cf. Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 256, and Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 73, 107, 163.

⁴¹ Cf. Altman, *The Guardians in Action*, xiv and Stanley Rosen “Review Essay: Chasing the Chimaera,” *Essays in Philosophy: Ancient*, ed. Martin Black (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2013), 177.

⁴² Cf., e.g., Rowe, *Art of Philosophical Writing*, 41. Consider also Gerson’s suggestion that any development or revisions to Plato’s philosophy that took place over the course of his long life are to be relativized to his fundamental, life-long commitment to what Gerson calls “Ur-Platonism,” the proto-Platonic proto-doctrine unified by a set of basic philosophical commitments. If Plato developed over time, according to Gerson, he did so on account of his higher commitment to Ur-Platonism. See *From Plato to Platonism*, Ch. 1 and 73-74.

revisions rather than originals. And we do have ancient testimony that suggests that Plato did significantly revise his works over time.⁴³ Both ancient testimony and conceptual analysis, then, suggest that authorial development does not *eo ipso* warrant a developmentalist hermeneutic, such as that deployed by Nehamas and Woodruff.⁴⁴

10. But, aside from any problematic implications and the inconsistency with the full gamut of the ancient testimonia, developmentalism is vitiated by more fundamental problems, as Howland has shown.⁴⁵ First, Plato himself doesn't seem to have thought it important to leave behind a record of his own development. While Plato frequently alludes to his other works, he does not write prefaces, as Howland notes. Aside from the testimony of the Platonic *Letters* (the authenticity of which is widely disputed) and other ancient figures, we have no access to Plato's "prefatory" thinking in which he might tell us directly and unequivocally

⁴³ Cf. Howland, "Re-Reading Plato," 200; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition*, 25 (quoted in Howland, "Re-Reading Plato," 202); Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, III.37-38, and George Boys-Stones *Platonist Philosophy: 80 BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 52.

⁴⁴ It should also be noted that an argument against the viability of a developmentalist hermeneutic does not *eo ipso* constitute an argument for a unitarian hermeneutic. Nevertheless, a hermeneutical *inclination* toward unitarianism is warranted. As the early Middle Platonist philosopher Eudorus suggests, "Plato is a man of many voices, not of many views" (quoted in Tarrant, *Plato's First Interpreters*, 73). As Gerson has argued, the omnipresence of Socrates in the Platonic corpus invites and grounds cross-dialogical interpretation, for it would be unnatural to assume that an author who intentionally places the same character in different contexts did not intend for the audience to take that character as the same character (if we found the same character in two of Shakespeare's plays, wouldn't that suggest that the two plays are connected in some way?). See *From Plato to Platonism*, 89; cf. Tarrant, *Plato's First Interpreters*, 43; D. C. Schindler, *Plato's Critique of Impure Reason: On Goodness and Truth in the Republic* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 34-35; Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 8; and Desjardins, *Plato and the Good: Illuminating the Darkling Vision* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 147-148. While we can't uncritically and decontextually lift out elements of one dialogue and apply them to another without justification, we also cannot simply bracket out the rest of the corpus when interpreting a given dialogue; to do so would be to suffer from a sort of self-imposed "hermeneutical Alzheimer's disease," as Gerson suggests (*From Plato to Platonism*, 88).

⁴⁵ On the inconsistent appeal to ancient evidence, see Howland, "Re-Reading Plato:" 189-190, as well as Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 53-61, 99-100. It is worth noting that despite all of the many advantages modern scholarship possesses over that accomplished in the ancient commentaries, those advantages are not unilateral. Consider, e.g., Thomas Taylor, *Philosophy and Writings of Plato* (Watchmaker Publishing, 2010), 81.

about his own development. It appears as if Plato himself did not think such a prefatory statement about his mental development needed to be given to his reader in order for them to understand his writings; he does not seem to subscribe to the model of interpretation being projected onto him.

11. Second, developmentalism has in more recent years been tied to stylometric analysis, but, as Howland and others have argued, such developmentalist arguments overestimate what stylometric analysis can accomplish.⁴⁶ Though stylometric analysis does seem to effectively sort the dialogues into distinct groupings that mostly map onto the Early-Middle-Late trichotomy, it does so unclearly, and, more importantly, the *judgment* that we can take stylometric groupings *as* compositional chronological groups suffers from a basic circularity.⁴⁷ As Howland argues, “stylometric analysis [...] rests upon the hypothesis of stylistic evolution.”⁴⁸ Stylometric analysis only groups texts into similar styles; it doesn’t by itself give chronology. That chronology has to be supplied from elsewhere, and so, in order for stylometric analysis to reveal anything about chronology, we need to have already furnished some chronological data (“fixed-points”). In principle, there could be stylometrically-detectable differences that neither rely on nor reveal chronological development. For example, Plato could be *feigning* stylistic differences.⁴⁹ In order for stylometric analysis to suggest anything about development of the *mens Platonis*, we would need an antecedent developmentalist account. Stylistic data, however, are not self-interpreting, and other explanations are possible in principle. The principle of “logographic necessity” (*anagkēn*

⁴⁶ Cf. Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 75; likewise, see Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 23-24.

⁴⁷ A remark from D. A. Russel (*Plutarch*, 2nd ed. [London: Bristol Classical Press, 2001], 80-81) on Plutarch’s putative development applies equally well here: “There is no independent argument for this, and it is circular to deduce difference of date from difference of doctrine.”

⁴⁸ Howland, “Re-Reading Plato,” 206.

⁴⁹ Cf. Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 18 and Howland, “Re-Reading Plato,” 207, 209.

logographikēn, 264b)⁵⁰—first articulated by Plato in the *Phaedrus* itself—whereby we ought to assume (initially, at least) that whatever is written in a given composition has been well-chosen and written for a reason (i.e., “nothing is accidental in a Platonic dialogue”),⁵¹ demands that we only resort to external considerations as *sufficient* for explanation when all internal considerations have failed.

12. Finally, there’s a more direct and, ultimately, in my opinion, more Platonic response to the issue of the apparent unsystematicity of the Platonic corpus. Commenting on the apparent “fact that there is no such thing as a Platonic system” into which one could try to fit the *Phaedrus*, Josef Pieper states that, as it seems to him, “the absence of a coherent system is not a sign of internal contradictions in Plato’s mind, but [...] a mark of tacit respect for the unfathomability of the universe.”⁵² To develop a comprehensive system runs the risk of reducing the unfathomability, indeed the ineffability and inexhaustibility of the universe and its principle(s), to discursive rationality; this is a risk, as we’ll go on to discuss throughout this project, that the *Phaedrus* is unwilling to take, a risk that the dialogue, in fact, actively *cautions* us against making.⁵³ To anticipate, there is simply *too much* to reality to be captured by a system

⁵⁰ Leo Strauss is perhaps the most famous referent for his discussion of this principle (cf., e.g., *The City and Man* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987], 53), though Strauss heavily inflects the principle with his emphasis on Plato’s alleged “irony.” We’ll discuss Strauss and ironic readings of Plato in Ch. 3 below.

⁵¹ John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, 3rd edition (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 17.

⁵² Josef Pieper, *Enthusiasm and Divine Madness: On the Platonic Dialogue Phaedrus*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2000), xv-xvi.

⁵³ Others have also suggested that the *Phaedrus* is a caution against reducing philosophy and the ineffable reality philosophy seeks to fathom to discursive rationality; see, for example, Catherine Osborne, “‘No’ Means ‘Yes’: The Seduction of the Word in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Boston Area Colloquium of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 15 (1999). However, there is a tendency among those who take this view to overstate the Platonic warning (especially in response to the kind of “analytic” scholarship, typified by Gregory Vlastos, which reduces the dialogues’ philosophy to their discursive argumentation). In her comment on the paper just cited, Susan Levin rightly criticizes Osborne along these lines (see “Commentary on Osborne,” *Boston Area Colloquium of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 15 [1999], 284ff.). In this project, I will use “reason” (except where specified otherwise) in a way that includes both “discursive” rationality and “non-discursive”

constructed by discursive reason (which is not to say that one's reception of disparate truths concerning that inexhaustible reality does not, thereby, "hold together," and is not a *sus-tēma*, in the classical sense). Rather than take Plato's unsystematicity as a mark against him or as something which needs to be explained away by postulating intellectual development, we might, if we are willing to listen to and follow Plato on his own terms, take Plato's unsystematicity as a *positive, intentional, and fitting* response to reality, as he sees it.

13. So if our brief review of external, non-textual accounts of the apparent disunity of Plato's *Phaedrus* is sufficient to convince us that the solution, resolution, or dissolution to the paradox articulated above is not to be found therein, we must look elsewhere. If not outside the text, then inside the text; we thus enter the realm of speculating about the intentional structure of the dialogue. Two options present themselves: either Plato *intentionally* wrote a disunified dialogue (for some end that is, presumably, discoverable, if not yet discovered) or Plato wrote a unified dialogue, one that does not immediately exhibit its compositional merits, but one which rewards the patient and diligent reader with such an exhibition. We'll thus turn to a consideration of the unifying features commentators have historically proposed as well as the criteria by which we can assess the merits of any putative unifying features for resolving our paradox about the *Phaedrus*'s composition.

§2.2. Textual Resolutions to the *Phaedrus*'s Disunity

14. Though there are some commentators who take the *Phaedrus* to have failed to meet its own criteria for successful composition,⁵⁴ and though there are others who think that the

insight and will argue that while the *Phaedrus* should rightly be seen as a warning against reducing philosophy to discursive rationality, it is incorrect to take the *Phaedrus* as devaluing reason as such.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., the remark from Raeder mentioned in note 24 above.

problem of unity is a distraction from more important matters,⁵⁵ the vast majority of commentators take the dialogue to be both unified and much more well-composed than a first pass reveals (and they are right to do so, as we will argue).⁵⁶ In his 1932 seminar on the *Phaedrus*, Heidegger went so far as to claim that it is “the most perfect” of the dialogues.⁵⁷ That being said, despite the wide consensus that the dialogue is (or, at least, that it *must* be) more well-composed and unified than it initially appears, there remains widespread disagreement about just what unifies the dialogue. Further, there is some significant disagreement about what even *constitutes* unity.⁵⁸ In what has become the standard analysis of scholarly attempts to resolve the *Phaedrus*’s unity problem, Daniel Werner provides a number of helpful distinctions and criteria by which we can better determine how to approach the unity problem on textual grounds. We will briefly articulate the key points of Werner’s article before going on to discuss how my own proposal satisfies the requirements Werner puts forth.

15. In his review of scholarly discussions of the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus*, Werner identifies four basic approaches commentators have taken to resolve (or, in one case, dissolve) the unity of the *Phaedrus*: 1. “the thematic approach” (i.e., grounding the unity of the

⁵⁵ See, e.g., the concluding sentences of Ferrari’s *Listening to the Cicadas*: “Plato does not attempt to smooth out or spirit away this result, contingent though it is. He lets the rough edges of the world poke through the joints of his dialogue. Let us not struggle too hard, then, to unify the *Phaedrus*; for the real struggle is elsewhere” (232). Ferrari reaffirms the same point in “The Unity of the ‘Phaedrus’: A Response,” 25. Likewise, see Kasteley, “Respecting the Rupture,” 150-151.

⁵⁶ See Werner, “Problem of Unity,” 125-129 for a critical review of what he calls the “debunking” approach, whereby one tries to *dissolve* rather than *resolve* the unity problem. In addition to Ferrari’s debunking approach, Werner discusses that of Malcolm Heath (in “The Unity of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 7 [1989]), the most prominent voice for this approach. Werner’s conclusion concerning Ferrari and Heath is in the same spirit as our argument in §2.1 above; cf. 129.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Francisco Gonzalez, “‘I Have to Live in Eros’: Heidegger’s 1932 Seminar on Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Epoché*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2015), 217. The text from the seminar appears in *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 83 (*Seminare Platon-Aristoteles-Augustinus*), which has yet to be translated. See Katherine Davies, “Heidegger’s Reading(s) of the *Phaedrus*,” *Studia Phaenomenologica*, Vol. 20 (2020) for an account of Heidegger’s recurring engagement with the *Phaedrus* throughout his career.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Heath, “The Unity of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” 153.

dialogue in its prominent theme or themes, that is, in the dialogue's philosophical content), 2. "the non-thematic approach" (i.e., grounding the unity of the dialogue in the dialogue's formal qualities, such as dramatic features, plot, tone, imagery, repetitious language, etc.), 3. "the debunking approach" (i.e., taking the apparent disunity of the dialogue as real rather than merely apparent and denying the need to resolve *why* it's disunified on textual grounds), and 4. "the strategic approach" (i.e., accepting the dialogue's apparent disunity and arguing that that disunity serves some auxiliary purposes).⁵⁹ Werner argues that the debunking approach is, ultimately, uncharitable and methodologically dissatisfying.⁶⁰ Werner further argues that the thematic, nonthematic, and strategic approaches need not be seen as incompatible, so long as we rethink what thematic unity entails.⁶¹ In my view, Werner's arguments are convincing on both points.

16. The majority of prior commentators have sought the unity of the *Phaedrus* by way of "thematic monism," a specification of the thematic approach which seeks to find a single, dominant theme, to which all other themes in the dialogue are subordinate and relativized. Most commonly, rhetoric and love (*erōs*) are thought to be suitable candidates for the main theme (philosophy itself is the next most common); other commentators have argued for beauty, self-knowledge, writing, recollection, community, politics, education, and soul-leading; Werner suggests that myth should also be considered as a contender.⁶² Werner convincingly

⁵⁹ Werner, "Problem of Unity," 93-94.

⁶⁰ See note 56 above.

⁶¹ Kenneth Dorter's approach is an example of the convergence of thematic, nonthematic, and strategic unifying features. Against Heath, Dorter argues that the dialogue "does exhibit thematic unity as well as narrative unity, but that the thematic unity is to be found not in minimizing the difference between the two halves, but by insisting on it;" "The Method of Division and the Division of the *Phaedrus*," *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 26 (2006), 260.

⁶² Beauty: The ancient Neoplatonists Iamblichus and Hermias took the governing theme (or, in their language, the *skopos*, the target) to be "beauty of every kind" (*Scholium* 14.9), though Hermias reports that his predecessors have taken it to be primarily about love, rhetoric, the soul, the Good, and the primary beauty, as distinct from beauty of every kind (*Scholium* 9.13-10.9). The Renaissance Platonist Marsilio Ficino

argues that though rhetoric is omnipresent in the dialogue (not only is it explicitly discussed in much of the second half of the dialogue, but also the three speeches on love are enactments of rhetoric, and the whole dialogue takes place on account of the way in which Phaedrus is under the spell of the rhetorician Lysias), the two arguments that tend to be given for its

follows suit; cf. *Commentaries on Plato: Volume 1: Phaedrus and Ion*, trans. Michael Allen [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008], xviii.

Rhetoric: The majority of modern thematic monists have taken the governing theme to be rhetoric (see Werner, "Problem of Unity," 95, note 5 for a lengthy, though by no means exhaustive, list of adherents; see 95-100 for Werner's discussion of rhetoric as a unifying theme).

Philosophy, Dialectics, Collection and Division: The second most frequent suggestion is philosophy; cf. *ibid.*, 105-108. If philosophy is basically synonymous with dialectics (as Schleiermacher holds), and if dialectics is just the method of collection and division, as the dialogue suggests, we could add here Dorter's argument that "the two halves of the dialogue explore these two species [what's innate and what's acquired; cf. 237d], respectively, and that the thematic unity of the *Phaedrus* corresponds to the way the method of division unifies species within a genus;" "Method of Division," 260; cf. 262.

Love: Given the prominence of the love-theme (especially in the dialogue's "first half"), we might expect it to be as frequently elevated as rhetoric (see Werner, "Problem of Unity," 100-105). Most commentators do accept that love is a major theme, though Werner remarks that he "know[s] of no modern interpreter who has argued that *erōs* is the main theme of the dialogue" (*ibid.*, 102); rather, most thematic monists find themselves compelled to argue that the love theme is somehow inferior or subordinate to whichever theme they seek to elevate. Many, however, have claimed that love is not properly thematic at all, but is the mere occasion for the rhetorical speeches given in the first half. Though no commentator seems willing to elevate love as the primary theme of the *Phaedrus*, the fact that most commentators find the need to argue against (or, at least, dismiss) love's primacy speaks to its candidacy (especially since degrading love as a fundamental theme of the *whole* dialogue seems to entail degrading the significance of the Palinode).

Other themes: On the less commonly posited themes, see Werner, "Problem of Unity," 108-109, as well as Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, xiii for some of the older German scholarship not considered by Werner (specifically, Franz Susemihl's contention that recollection is the unifier and Paul Natorp's contention that it is community, neither of which I have been able to review). Werner gives further reasons to see myth as a unifying theme in *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ch. 9.

Soul-Leading: Since Werner's article was published, Jessica Moss has renewed Elizabeth Asmis's contention that soul-leading is the unity of the *Phaedrus*; see Moss, "Soul-Leading: The Unity of the *Phaedrus*, Again," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 43 (2012) and Asmis, "'Psychagogia' in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Illinois Classical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1986). In the interpretive essay appended to his translation of the dialogue, Scully concurs; see *Phaedrus*, 88. Likewise, Paul Ryan, *Plato's Phaedrus: A Commentary for Greek Readers* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 253-254. D. P. E. Muir similarly clarifies the relationship between love and rhetoric as two forms (or components) of soul-leading (interpreted as soul-formation) but does not explicitly state that this is the unity of the *Phaedrus*; see "Friendship in Education and the Desire for the Good: An Interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 32., No. 2 (2000), 234-235. Marina McCoy also suggests that soul-leading can be seen as a unifier of the *Phaedrus*; see "Love and Soul-Leading in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *A Handbook on Platonic Love from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. John Dillon and Carl Sean O'Brien (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). My own argument (as set forth in §3-4 and pursued throughout this work) will take up and expand on Asmis's and Moss's proposal (though we will only consider their arguments directly in Ch. 4 below, since my argument proceeds differently).

primacy aren't satisfactory. The fact that rhetoric is omnipresent, enacted, and discussed is sufficient only to argue that it is *a* unifying theme, not *the* unifying theme. Most of those who opt for rhetoric as the dialogue's central unifier do so under the under-argued assumption that the dialogue's unity has to be *either* rhetoric or love, and so make a disjunctive argument that since it can't be love (given the way in which love seems to "drop out" in the dialogue's second part), it must be rhetoric. But this disjunction is unwarranted in two ways: 1. There could be other contenders for the unifying theme (e.g., philosophy, self-knowledge), and so dismissing love is not yet sufficient to prove that rhetoric is the unifying theme (we'd also have to dismiss each of the other plausible contenders), and 2. There are good reasons for thinking that love hasn't, in fact, "dropped out" of the second part of the dialogue.⁶³ With respect to the latter, Werner has supplied sufficient reasons to think that love is just as relevant to the dialogue's second half as it is to the first.⁶⁴

17. Love is just as omnipresent, then, as rhetoric. However, the same arguments that assailed the primacy of rhetoric likewise assail the primacy of love: 1. Demonstrating its omnipresence is sufficient to show that it is *a* unifying theme, not *the* unifying theme; 2. We have yet to be given convincing reasons to think that we *must* choose between love and rhetoric (rather than allowing a third contender or accepting that multiple themes might co-unify the

⁶³ On these criticisms, see "Problem of Unity," 99-100.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 100. Examples include: Erato, the Muse who is involved in love matters and named after love (259d); the politicians' love for speeches and for having their speeches recorded for prosperity (257e); the fact that Socrates is a lover (*erastēs*) of collection and division (266b). Socrates extends rhetoric to include not just public discourse, but also private *sullogoi* (conversations; 261a), a word that has deeply erotic coloring. Likewise, the seed-planting imagery used to talk about the artful writer's practice of writing in the soul recalls the erotic plant-growth imagery in the Palinode (101). More features emerge if we expand our consideration to *philia* language (cf. *ibid.*, 100, note 13).

dialogue). It is clear, then, that love and rhetoric are both unifying themes, equally omnipresent throughout the dialogue, but it is not clear that either has a claim to primacy.⁶⁵

18. The fact that neither of the dialogue's primary themes can convincingly be said to be prior to the other, coupled with the fact that the dialogue elevates a number of other themes beyond love and rhetoric, leads Werner to suggest that we ought to revise our understanding of thematic unity. Rather than thematic monism (wherein we demand that a single theme reigns supreme, to which all other themes are subordinate), we should consider the dialogue as unified by a conjunction of unifying themes (thematic pluralism).⁶⁶ To insist on thematic monism, Werner argues, is to distort the dialogue form by expecting it to act as if it were a modern philosophical treatise.⁶⁷ Further, "strict thematic unity, of the sort demanded by thematic monists, does not exist in any of Plato's dialogues."⁶⁸ Perhaps most importantly, strict thematic monism seems to unjustly degrade equally important themes. In other words, if rhetoric and love both have strong claims to unity, and if choosing one over the other requires, to some extent, falsifying the claim of the unchosen potential unifier, then why choose between the two? Rather than either/or, we can have both/and. Further, if we opt for thematic pluralism, we make a space for the contributions of other themes beyond rhetoric and love,

⁶⁵ Werner's conclusion here echoes that of Schleiermacher 200 years prior, who likewise argued that neither love nor rhetoric could be the primary theme of the dialogue, for elevating either to primacy would lead to the trivialization of significant portions of the dialogue; see *Introductions*, 49-56.

⁶⁶ See Werner, "Problem of Unity," 110 for a discussion of the point.

⁶⁷ Consider, for example, Heath's arguments (in "The Unity of the *Phaedrus*") that our search for *thematic* unity is anachronistic; a Greek audience would only expect formal unity and would be open to whatever digressions or thematic shifts might occur so long as those digressions or shifts seemed appropriate to the plot, setting, and characters of the drama.

⁶⁸ Werner, "Problem of Unity," 111.

which certainly play a strong and recurring role in the dialogue, as those who've argued in favor of them have shown.⁶⁹

19. As noted above, Werner argues that thematic unity is compatible with nonthematic unity and strategic unity. These latter approaches have been under-considered on account of the (perhaps overburdened) emphasis on thematic monism as *the* criterion for unity. If we look for unity in the dialogue solely in its thematic aspects, we've ignored the fact that dialogues are also *literary* works. Qua literary, a work is unified by other features, even in the absence of thematic unity.⁷⁰ Such features include dramatic features (such as plot, characters, time, place, action, tone or mood),⁷¹ "verbal texture" (the repetition of key words, lexemes, and phrases),⁷² formal structure,⁷³ and the reciprocity of word and deed (i.e., what's said is done, and what's done is said).⁷⁴ The *Phaedrus* is clearly unified in this way (it has a consistent plot; the characters act consistently; the time and place don't shift haphazardly; there are a very large number of

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 133.

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*, 115-116. This is the primary argument of Heath's "The Unity of the *Phaedrus*;" cf. 160ff. Heath argues that the *Phaedrus* meets Aristotle's criterion of literary unity (unity of plot, which is achieved by the audience being able to say yes to the question "would these characters in this circumstance do and say what they do and say?"). Heath goes on to note that a literary analysis can show that a text is unified from formal connections (e.g., verbal repetitions), but it's "more speculative" to suggest that such formal connections bear material content. As we'll argue below, there are formal features of the dialogue which *do* bear on the material content, and so, we can say, my view of the *Phaedrus* is one in which the nonthematic, formal, literary elements don't just unify the dialogue in parallel to the thematic unifier to be proposed, but also themselves point to that thematic unifier.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 116. For an extensive discussion of how these features function in the dialogues, see Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*.

⁷² See *ibid.*, 117-120, as well as Anne Lebeck, "The Central Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, vol. 13 (1972), 272, note 12: "Plato, in a manner similar to the dramatists, uses thematic repetition as a means of keeping certain ideas before the reader." Plato does this, as Werner claims, "to make a philosophical point" ("Problem of Unity," 119). As we'll see in §4, Plato's use of "verbal texture" to make a philosophical point is crucial to my argument for the unity of the *Phaedrus*.

⁷³ Like Charles Griswold (*Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986], *passim*), Werner sees in the *Phaedrus* a "Palinodic" structure, whereby the dialogue progresses by a series of recantations ("Problem of Unity," 121-122). As we'll see below, I take the *Phaedrus* to be structurally unified, but not in the way in which Werner and Griswold do. Rather, my structural thesis is more akin to that of Iamblichus, Hermias, and Ficino, who see the dialogue's structure to be one of ascent and descent; see Hermias, *Scholias*, 12.31-13.5 and Ficino, *Commentaries*, xvii.

⁷⁴ Werner, "Problem of Unity," 123.

images, terms, and motifs that show up in various ways throughout the dialogue;⁷⁵ speeches are first delivered and then discussed, while love is first discussed then enacted; etc.), regardless of whether it also exhibits thematic unity. Given the fact that many of the literary and formal features also point to the thematic features, we should see the nonthematic unity of the *Phaedrus* as not just supplementing, but bolstering the thematic unity. An analogous argument could be made for the strategic unity of the *Phaedrus*.⁷⁶ If Plato intends for us to be struck (as we inevitable all are) by the *appearance* of disunity, or “rupture” as Kasteley put it), this may be because he wants to reinforce certain philosophical themes thereby.⁷⁷ We should ask “which?” and “how?”

20. On the basis of Werner’s discussion, we should expect that a satisfactory resolution to the unity of the *Phaedrus* will be one which attends to both thematic and nonthematic unifying features and is open to a strategic account of the dialogue’s apparent disunity (for it would be more in keeping with the hermeneutics of charity to assume that the appearance of disunity, which strikes the reader so forcefully, is intentional rather than a mark of the author’s inability to adequately impose unity on thematic and nonthematic grounds alone). Further, we should expect (optimally, at least), that the nonthematic and strategic unifying features reflect the thematic unifying features in some way. Finally, we should expect that a satisfying thematic resolution to the unity problem is one which doesn’t degrade any valid claimants to thematic

⁷⁵ On this point, see especially Lebeck, “Central Myth.”

⁷⁶ See Werner, “Problem of Unity,” 132: “Textual diversity, however, does not imply textual disunity.”

⁷⁷ Werner suggests that there are two general reasons why Plato would want to present to his audience an apparently disunified text for strategic purposes: 1. The disjointedness reinforces philosophical themes developed elsewhere therein (e.g., the “juxtaposition of the ‘mad’ (or ‘excessive’) palinode with the ‘sober’ discussion of rhetoric and dialectic serves to dramatize” the relationship between madness and temperance problematized in the love-speeches; *ibid.*, 130); 2. The disjointedness provokes reflection on the status of the dialogue “as a *written* text” (*ibid.*, 132).

unification on account of making an either/or out of a both/and (or, as the case may be, a both/and/and/...).

§3. Thematic Monism Revisited: Soul-Leading as the Incorporating Theme

§3.1. Thematic Incorporation

1. Before stating my own proposal for the unity of the *Phaedrus*, I think it is worth noting that Werner's argument for thematic pluralism over thematic monism, salient as it is, draws an unnecessary inference from the premises. Werner, as we just saw, opts for thematic pluralism primarily because any argument for thematic monism would require the degradation of seemingly equally (or at least significantly) relevant themes: I must, for example, choose love *instead* of rhetoric, and so I must show that rhetoric isn't really as central to the *Phaedrus* as it appears to be.⁷⁸ But Werner assumes that taking a number of themes as equally (or near enough to equally) important requires the relinquishment of thematic monism in favor of thematic pluralism. One could, instead, adopt a thematic monism which *integrates* all of the significant themes under a common rubric. Doing so (if we can find a suitable theme) would allow us to show that thematic monism can "save the phenomena"⁷⁹ just as well as thematic pluralism can, so long as thematic monism can make a case for elevating a theme without

⁷⁸ See note 65 above on Schleiermacher on this point. As we saw above, Werner articulates other reasons besides the degradation issue: no dialogue exhibits the kind of thematic unity seemingly required, and to demand thematic monism would be to mistake the dialogue form for something more like a Kantian treatise. I grant these points as stated but suggest by way of response that my own suggestion for how thematic monism can, in principle at least, incorporate thematic pluralism falls prey to neither point.

⁷⁹ This phrase (*sōzein ta phainomena*) is attributed to Plato by Simplicius as part of an elementary "philosophy of science" (i.e., Plato was taken to be a mild anti-realist about scientific explanation of the natural world: scientists couldn't give exact, demonstrative accounts of *why* the events of visible nature happen as they do; instead, they can give models which "save the phenomena," that is, account for what is seen. But, notably, multiple such models might equally save the phenomena, and so one can't adjudicate which is "true" based on their effectiveness alone; on the history of the "saving the phenomena" interpretation of natural science, see Pierre Duhem, *To Save the Phenomena: An Essay on the Idea of Physical Theory from Plato to Galileo*, trans. Edmund Dolan and Chaninah Maschler [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985]).

thereby degrading other themes. The image we should think of is a living body and its constituent members (as our citation of 264c suggested to us): if we can show that the various contenders for thematic monism are all akin to the appendages and torso of a body, then we can say that all of these themes are, indeed, necessary to the vitality of the work without thereby denying that there is a single theme governing them, the head. Thematic monism can *incorporate* (in the etymological sense) thematic pluralism by showing that the various candidates for primacy all have particular corporate functions governed by a “head.” Though the “head” is that which governs all the “members,” each of the members plays a role in the well-being of the whole; a “head” without the other bodily members wouldn’t be able to govern anything at all.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the “head” still has a privileged significance insofar as it is that which organizes and directs the whole organism toward its end.

2. What I propose to do in this section is give a conceptual account of why I think that the *Phaedrus* can be unified thematically by “soul-leading” (*psuchagogia*), a theme concerning which Werner thinks there is a “good case,” for it “genuinely recur[s] throughout the whole dialogue.”⁸¹ In other words I’ll claim here that soul-leading can act as not just *a* unifying theme, but also as a unifying theme which can incorporate the other contenders that have been put forth in such a way that none are degraded. Soul-leading, then, is my proposal for a thematically-monist unifying feature of the dialogue. As I’ll go on to discuss (§4), the thematic weight of soul-leading is *bolstered* by the nonthematic aspects of the dialogue, especially with

⁸⁰ As we’ll see below, a similar remark will hold for the relationship between the Palinode’s charioteer and his horses; while the charioteer ought to govern the horses, the charioteer will not be able to move without them.

⁸¹ Werner, “Problem of Unity,” 109. In addition to the arguments made by Asmis and Moss, see also Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 3ff.

respect to verbal texture (the *Phaedrus* is inordinately fond of the language of “leading” [*agein* and *agein*-compounds] and “following” [*hepasthai*]).

3. We’ve seen that the following thematic features have been promoted as unifiers: most prominently, love, rhetoric, and philosophy, but also dialectic, beauty, education, recollection, self-knowledge, community, politics, writing, and soul-leading. For the sake of argument, we’ll assume that there is a good case for each of these candidates for thematic unity (minimally, under Werner’s criterion discussed above). Our question, then, is whether we can unify the unifiers. I will try to do so in what follows, under the aspect of soul-leading, though the arguments for some of the claims I make will have to await later chapters for substantiation. In brief, what I’ll argue over the course of the rest of this section is that each of the other contenders for thematic unity can be seen as bearing a direct relation to soul-leading. Though soul-leading is a remarkably ambiguous phenomenon (recall our previous remarks about the historical connotations of *psuchagogia*) as it shows up in the *Phaedrus*, we have some warrant for saying that, properly understood, soul-leading is integral to philosophy. Philosophy is essentially characterized by its loving fidelity to what’s true and what’s real, and by practicing philosophy, we are led by reality to itself, which is the end of the philosophical act (though, as we’ll clarify later on, there’s a sense in which there’s a bit more to the story, for philosophy is only completed in its communication to others). We are led to reality especially by love and by language, the primary means of philosophical soul-leading. Though love and language can be remarkably misleading (as we’ll discuss in greater detail in later chapters), rightly-ordered love (love that is truly ordered to Beauty) and rightly-ordered language (language that is beautifully ordered to Truth) lead us, through images and reminders, to recollect the superheavenly forms which we had previously seen before embodiment. When we are rightly-led, we come to know ourselves, and if we respond correctly to our self-

recognition and our recollection of the way reality is, we'll act accordingly, with the effect that we'll endeavor to lead others to the same nourishing truths to which we have ourselves been led.

§3.2. Soul-Leading as Philosophy's Outer Disposition

4. Let us begin with philosophy. Philosophy is not the most obvious choice for the thematic unity of the *Phaedrus* (rhetoric and love outrank it on that front), but it is a well-attested choice, and clearly a concern for Plato throughout his corpus. More accurately, it is the *raison d'être* for the Platonic corpus. But, importantly, one of the most vital questions in Plato is *what is philosophy?* What distinguishes a philosopher from a non-philosopher generally or from the sophist, the “counterfeit double” of the philosopher?⁸² We seem to have been promised a dialogue called *The Philosopher*—a promise that was not kept (at least not obviously)—given that in the *Sophist*, Socrates asks his new comrade, the Eleatic Stranger, to distinguish the philosopher from the sophist and the statesman. We get dialogues devoted to the latter two, but we do not get one devoted to the former (though there have been arguments that the philosopher emerges nonetheless amidst “Plato’s Trilogy,” which appends the *Theatetus* to the *Sophist* and *Statesman* on dramatic grounds; additionally, we could say that *all* of the dialogues are devoted to the philosopher, insofar as they are all, or almost all, grounded in the dramatic portraiture of Socrates, the philosopher *par excellence*).⁸³ To make a bold claim that

⁸² The phrase is William Desmond’s (*Hegel’s God: A Counterfeit Double?* [New York: Routledge, 2017]), used to characterize something which presents itself as another but falsifies that other in the process (in this case, the philosopher and the sophist look similar, as we see especially in the Eleatic Stranger’s sixth definition of the sophist, and so can be thought of as “doubles,” but the sophist is a counterfeit version oriented in a wholly different way, toward power rather than truth).

⁸³ On this, see especially Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Plato as Portraitist,” in *The Gadamer Reader. The Laws and Epinomis* are the only dialogues which do not feature Socrates (though some, following a somewhat ambiguous remark from Aristotle’s *Politics* [1265a], have argued that the Athenian Stranger is Socrates in disguise). Even those dialogues in which Socrates takes a back seat (i.e., *Clitophon*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias*) are heavily shaped by Socrates’s presence.

will have to be justified later on, the philosopher is characterized above all by her unflagging orientation to that which *is* most.⁸⁴ This more than any method or doctrine is what it is to be a philosopher (though that does not mean that philosophy is methodologically- or doctrinally-neutral, as many of the more open-ended interpretations of Socratic philosophy suggest). The philosopher is the one who *bears witness* to the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, both by searching for knowledge of the Good, True, and Beautiful and by living in accordance with whatever she “divines” of the Good, True, and Beautiful (cf. *apomanteuomenē* at *Republic* 505e). The *inner* character of philosophy just is this *loving fidelity* to that which is ultimate, a conviction which requires that one bear *ultimate* witness to the ultimate things by willingly and obediently going back down into the cave for the sake of that witness, regardless of the threat of political murder (cf. *Republic* 517a, 519c), a threat realized in Socrates’s own life, and a fate to which Plato himself came dangerously close. The philosopher takes herself to be wholly relativized to that which is ultimate, that around which she “orbits,” around which her life is structured: “it is the truth that you cannot contradict, beloved Agathon: to contradict Socrates isn’t hard at all” (*Symposium* 201c).⁸⁵

5. If we can (for the sake of argument) take the *inner* disposition of philosophy to be this loving, obedient, lived witness to the “lovely forms” (*bosa erasta*, 250e), then we can draw a few implications that will link philosophy to soul-leading. If the character of the act of philosophy *as* philosophy is a loving attention to what’s ultimate, then, as we have seen, what’s

⁸⁴ For the time being, I will refer to the forms, the real beings (*ta ontōs onta*), really real reality (*ousia ontōs ousa*. 247c), Beauty, the Good, and other such things generally with words like “the ultimate things” so as to prescind, from any attempt to distinguish and characterize the different objects of the Palinode’s metaphysical vision. I’ll try to clarify some of these matters as we go forward, especially in Ch. 6. For a similar characterization of Socratic-Platonic philosophy, see Schindler’s *Plato’s Critique*, especially Chapter 4.

⁸⁵ Citations of the *Symposium* come from the translation of Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2017).

ultimate takes primacy over the philosopher herself. The norms by which the philosopher lives come from what's ultimate and not from the philosopher herself (or, more accurately, the norms do come from the philosopher herself when she attends to her own nature and the fundamental structure of her desire, which is for reality itself, on its own terms).⁸⁶ By living according to what's ultimate, the philosopher herself becomes *like unto* what's ultimate.⁸⁷ By orienting oneself to the stable objects of one's deepest, most intrinsic desire, one becomes "undislodgable" (*ametakinētos*, as Aristotle says at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105a). We *are* as we love. By striving for Beauty, we become beautiful (cf. 274a-b). In our care for what's absolute we relativize ourselves to what's absolute. But since what's absolute is invisible (cf. 247c), we have made ourselves like the absolute by pointing beyond ourselves toward the absolute; by

⁸⁶ A key feature of the Platonic tradition is the notion that determining the true, inbuilt nature of our desires allows us to see reality for what it is and thereby allows us to discern norms of conduct which respond to reality on reality's own terms. In other words, philosophical anthropology (particularly a study of human *erōs*) is the key to both metaphysics and ethics. David Roochnik has argued in *The Tragedy of Reason: Toward a Platonic Conception of Logos* (New York: Routledge, 1990) that it is a mistake to think that Plato himself took this style of argument to be "unimpeachable," despite giving what looks like such an account in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*. On his read, Diotima's ladder is a phenomenology of "dissatisfied desire" (116), which seems to promise that there is an object which can definitively fulfill human desire but fails to constitute a "transcendental argument" for Beauty itself (cf. 198-201). Though the Platonic philosopher has a conviction that these *ideai* exist, the Platonic philosopher recognizes that this conviction is always conditioned by the fact that she cannot prove that such universal structures of reality exist to the sophist. Reason meets its tragic fate: it seeks truth, but runs against its limits. Reason cannot convert but only exhort; to be content with mere protreptic is its fate. There is no space to directly address this "tragic" sense of reason (shared by Roochnik, Hyland, and Griswold) in this project. However, we might suggest the following: Roochnik's argument presumes that reason's fundamental aim is persuasion, but this is mistaken, for reason is (as we'll argue) primarily ordered instead to the reception of and manifestation of reality. Persuasion is a secondary task that follows upon reason's role in co-manifesting reality. Cf. *Phaedo* 91a: in order to avoid arguing for the sake of victory, Socrates "won't put [his] heart into making what [he says] seem to be true to those present, except as a side effect, but into making it seem to be the case to [he himself] as much as possible" (citations of the *Phaedo* are from the translation of Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem [Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 1998]). To take reason as ordered primarily to persuasion is to judge reason's success or failure by the wrong categories ("is the auditor persuaded" rather than "has reality been disclosed"). By judging reason's success by the wrong criteria, Roochnik allows the sophists and other critics of reason to set the terms and thereby arbitrarily, irrationally, perhaps even obstinately, judge reason as wanting, regardless of whether reason successfully manifested reality. On this, see Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 269-277.

⁸⁷ See 253a; cf. *Theaetetus* 176b. We'll discuss the way in which we become like what's ultimate in Chs. 4 and 6.

pointing away from ourselves and toward the invisible, we become invisible (not simply, but as a translucent medium, one which can still arrest a curious gaze, but one which diaphanously transmits the loving gaze past itself to that which is signified). Whereas the absolute *is* invisible (colorless, “visible to the mind alone, the soul’s pilot,” 247c), we *become* invisible by relativizing ourselves to the absolute; we become translucent, a mediator of sight, by *participating* in the absolute’s essential invisibility, by “having a share” (*methexis* = *meta* + *echein*) in the absolute. By being translucent, by being diaphanous, we can mediate another’s reception of the absolute, just as a translucent surface mediates one’s vision of the object beyond that surface (we’ll return to these points in Chs. 4 and 6).⁸⁸ If a philosopher sticks to her *inner* disposition, to her essential witness to that which is ultimate, then both her actions and her words will always (as we saw from Socrates remark in the *Symposium* quoted above) say to others “Don’t look at me! Look at what I’m looking at. Look at it *through* me.” By being essentially diaphanous, the philosopher *leads* the viewer away from the *mere* vision of something to the recognition of that which that something indicates, signifies, or images. The philosopher, who makes herself “like unto” what’s ultimate, becomes a mediating sign of what’s ultimate, and in the process can lead another past an initial vision of the philosopher herself to that around which the philosopher orients herself, reality itself. If, as Leonard Cohen puts it, “there’s a crack, a crack in everything; that’s how the light gets in” (“Anthem”), we could say that the philosopher, for Plato, is one who has made her life’s work becoming wholly such a crack.

6. If the analysis of the prior paragraph is correct (something which we will need to support further as we go forward), then we can say that though the *inner* disposition of philosophy is the loving, faithful witness to what’s true, good, and beautiful, the *outer*

⁸⁸ On the invisibility of the philosopher in Plato, see especially Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, ch. 4.

disposition of philosophy simply *is* soul-leading. Philosophy, as seen from the perspective of someone who is not yet “initiated” (as the Palinode’s language puts it) into philosophy, takes the form of soul-leading. Soul-leading is *philosophy communicated*; it is that loving witness as modeled for and passed on to another, like “light kindled from a leaping fire” (VII.341c-d).⁸⁹ As we’ll go on to discuss (see especially Ch. 5 below), soul-leading in the *Phaedrus* is philosophy communicated *to Phaedrus himself*, someone who has philosophical potential (as all do, in some regard, as we will see in Ch. 3), but who is ambiguous, “going in two directions” (257b), caught between the seductive allure of rhetorical prowess and the vulnerability of philosophy’s orientation toward truth.⁹⁰

7. If the philosopher becomes invisible by cleaving to the invisible, so too does the philosopher become *radiant* by cleaving to the radiant, another characteristic of that which is ultimate (cf. 252b, d; *Sophist* 216a-217a, 254a).⁹¹ To be radiant is to shine forth, to emit rays, to present oneself effulgently. As we will discuss in Ch. 6 below, the reality that the philosopher loves, to which she bears witness, to which she conforms herself and which she actively images, is *radiant*. By being a diaphanous medium, the philosopher allows that to which she

⁸⁹ The Platonic *Letters* will be cited by letter number (in Roman numerals) and Stephanus number. Translations of the *Letters* generally come from those of Glenn Morrow in Plato, *Complete Works*). In this case, the translation is my own, following that of R. G. Bury in *Letters, Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 7 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966) [= Loeb], which is much more faithful to the Greek on this line than is Morrow.

⁹⁰ On the vulnerability that attends the philosopher’s commitment to truth (on account of her renunciation of reason *as an instrument of power* in favor of a commitment to reason as fundamentally receptive and open to something transcendent to it), see Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, Chapter 5. Socrates calls attention to Phaedrus’s (lack of) direction in the question with which he opens the dialogue (see 227a).

⁹¹ As both the *Sophist* and the *Republic* attest, there are two kinds of blindness: one, the place where sophists love to hide and the condition of our thrownness before being led out of the cave, is the blindness which corresponds to darkness; the other, the place whither the philosopher leads, is the blindness which corresponds to brightness, wherein the light overwhelms the eye in its brightness and intensity, to which the eye must become accustomed. In the former, there is nothing to see; in the latter, there is *too much* to see. The philosopher’s radiance is the flip-side of her invisibility: by becoming translucent, she is lit up with the fullness of the Good’s light.

bears witness to shine forth through her, inflected by her own peculiar characteristics (as any diaphanous substance transmits by limiting what was given to it to transmit).⁹² In doing so, the philosopher has become an *iconic* image of that around which she orients her life. An icon, in the traditional religious sense, is not just a devotional image but is, instead, a window through which the viewer sees the reality imaged, by which one is *transported* to that reality.⁹³ By being a philosopher, by living according to one's loving witness to what's ultimate, the philosopher presents to others as her outer face just such an iconic visage through which others can be led to Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. The philosopher actively cares for the good of her companions and tries to steer her companions, through dialogue, myth, argument, etc., toward the same love and witness.⁹⁴ Thus, we can say that soul-leading *is* the outer face of philosophy, and so there is no incompatibility between adopting soul-leading as the primary theme and retaining a recognition of the centrality of philosophy to the *Phaedrus*.

§3.3. The Ways By Which the Soul is Led: Love and Language

⁹² The Neoplatonists developed this idea into a general principle, the "limitation of act by potency" (about which, see W. Norris Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency in St. Thomas: Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism?" *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008]). Act will remain unlimited unless and until it is limited by something which, in receiving the act, can limit it, as when form is instantiated as *this* particular. Cf. Ficino, *Commentaries*, VI.3 and our discussion of this point in Ch. 6. Notably, Clarke argues that the principle of the limitation of act by potency is not seen before the Neoplatonists on account of the fact that prior philosophers could only conceive of infinity negatively (as potential and divisible) rather than positively (as act, unified and all at once). While this seems true, the seeds for the principle are already in Plato, even though he doesn't yet have language for a positive infinite.

⁹³ We will justify utilization of the religious language of "icon" and "idol" in relation to the ontology of the image in Ch. 6 below.

⁹⁴ Gordon notes that the "'traditional' erotic dialogues dwell on two types of guidance," one that is "conceptually rooted in" the *agein*-language highlighted by the *Phaedrus*, and the other is rooted in the language of *epimeleomai* and *epimeleia*, "concepts of care and concern exercised by persons or gods overseeing and looking out for the interests of their charges" (*Plato's Erotic World: From Cosmic Origins to Human Death* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 201). As we will see in Chs. 4 and 6, both types of guidance are profoundly connected in the *Phaedrus* as two different moments (ascending leading and descending care) of soul-leading.

8. What then of love and of rhetoric, the other two themes with the greatest claim to primacy in the *Phaedrus*? If, as we just argued, soul-leading *is* philosophy as seen from the outside, then we can see both love and rhetoric as the *ways by which* philosophy leads those whom it leads, as Elizabeth Asmis and Jessica Moss have previously argued. Or, more accurately, we should say that both love (*erōs*) and *language* (*logos*) are the ways by which philosophy leads, for the dialogue’s “second half” is not (contrary to the common view) about rhetoric specifically as much as it is about the norms governing beautiful *language* generally, whether spoken or written.⁹⁵ Whereas soul-leading is the intrinsic “power of speech” (*logon dunamis*, 271c), rhetoric is only “a certain soul-leading through words” (*psychagogia tis dia logōn*, 261a); in other words, rhetoric is a certain way of exercising the natural capacity of *logos* itself, the power to lead souls. Socrates only begins to ask about rhetoric *after* posing a question about the norms governing language generally (“how is one able to speak and write beautifully, and how not,” 259e; picking up from 258d) and hearing Phaedrus respond to this question by reporting the common rhetorical notion that persuasion comes from manipulating people’s opinions, “not from truth” (260a). Rhetoric, dialectic, and myth-recounting are particular species of linguistic activity, and each is a way by which philosophy can lead the soul, but they get their psychagogic capacity from being modes of language use. They do so particularly from being modes of *beautiful* language use, not from anything peculiar to rhetoric. We’ll briefly discuss how love and language are each ways by which philosophy leads the soul before moving on to incorporate the remaining unifying themes. Love’s “psychagogic” function will be discussed at greater length in Ch. 4 (as well as in Ch. 5, where I’ll discuss the way in which

⁹⁵ Scholars who have, in my view, correctly assessed the proper scope of the dialogue’s “second half” include: Sallis (*Being and Logos*, 160), Zuckert (*Plato’s Philosophers*, 323), Desjardins (“Plato’s Serious Play,” 111), Øyvind Rabbås (“Writing, Memory, and Wisdom: The Critique of Writing in the *Phaedrus*.” *Symbolae Osloenses*. Vol. 84, No. 1 [2010], 30-31), and, more generally, Hyland (*Question of Beauty*, 68-69, 115), who argues that the *Phaedrus* as a whole is Plato’s “critique of *logos*.”

the dialogue dramatically enacts what the Palinode teaches, as discussed in Ch. 4), and language’s psychagogic function will be discussed further in Ch. 6 (alongside some preliminary comments in earlier chapters). We’ll also discuss the ways in which the psychagogic function of both love and language can be abused when disconnected from the ultimate as the end of soul-leading (Ch. 2).

9. Language and love are described and depicted in the *Phaedrus* in similar ways. As we already noted, both are predominantly thematized in one half of the dialogue and dramatized or enacted in the other half of the dialogue.⁹⁶ Both are described using ‘agogic’ (leading) language. Language, as we just saw, is explicitly linked to *psuchagōgia* twice. Once we look past “*psuchagōgia*” itself to its lexical (*agein* and *agein*-compounds) and semantic (*hepasthai*, to follow) cousins, we see that language is described using agogic terminology in other ways as well (as we shall go on to discuss).⁹⁷ While love is not explicitly linked to *psuchagōgia*, it is very frequently described using agogic language, especially in the Palinodic myth, which situates the experience and drama of love within a story of the mortal souls being led by the gods and by Zeus, “the great leader” (*ho megas hēgemōn*, 246e),⁹⁸ to a “place outside the heavens,” where they gaze upon the true beings and “really real reality” (*ousia ontōs ousa*, 247c).

⁹⁶ Admittedly, the dramatization or enactment of love in the dialogue’s second half is not nearly so apparent as the dialogue’s enactment of rhetoric in the three speeches of the dialogue’s first half. In addition to the points adduced by Werner (see note 64 above), I will be arguing (particularly in Ch. 5) that Socrates enacts the divinely-mad lover’s caring service (as discussed in Ch. 4) in the dialogue’s second half.

⁹⁷ We’ll discuss leading and following language below in §4; see also the appendix for a table of all of the uses of leading and following language in the dialogue.

⁹⁸ *Hēgēomai* (to think, opine, suppose) and its descendants (e.g., *hēgemōn*, “leader,” and *diēgesis*, “narrative,” but more literally, a leading-through) are etymologically related to *agein* (to lead). Hence one could translate most instances of *hēgēomai* as something like “as I (have been led to) think;” in some cases, as in *Symposium* 210a, which we will discuss elsewhere, it can be translated simply as “to lead” or “to guide.”

10. Likewise, language and love are both alternately described as great dangers, things that can lead the soul *astray*, and as great boons, things that can heal the soul and redirect it to what's best for it. "Clever (*deinon*) and hostile" (260c) rhetoric, oriented toward deception rather than truth, attempts to *lead away* (*apagōn*) the audience "from the truth to its opposite" for the rhetorician's own pecuniary benefit. Socrates elsewhere criticizes myths and poetry for misleading the many by telling lies about the gods;⁹⁹ in the *Phaedrus*, he criticizes himself and Lysias in their respective speeches for doing the same thing (242b-243d). Later, Socrates criticizes writing, with some help from the Egyptian god Thamus, for instilling a false sense of wisdom in those who take writings seriously. By contrast, Socrates gives his own account of love's goodness by means of a myth, caringly using the rhetorical art to lead Phaedrus toward the truth. Socrates later uses the give and take of dialogue, as well as some dialectic, to help redirect Phaedrus's faulty understandings of both love and rhetoric. Writing, too, is qualifiedly redeemed as something which can both remind the soul of what it formerly knew and serve as a guide for likeminded seekers. Likewise, love is thrashed in the dialogue's first two speeches as something which causes a deep, reason-eclipsing sickness in the lover, causing him to neglect his own affairs and to actively harm the beloved so as to keep the beloved in his grasp. By contrast, the Palinode claims that "the greatest of good things" come from erotic madness, "provided the madness is divinely given" (244b). As we'll argue, when love and language are rightly ordered, they lead toward what's ultimate, to the benefit of all involved.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ See, e.g., *Euthyphro* 6aff and *Republic* III.

¹⁰⁰ There is scholarly disagreement about what constitutes the end of soul-leading (and, by extension, of love and of language and the various uses of language). Our claim is that soul-leading is most properly ordered to reality itself, to what is ultimate. Hence, soul-leading is directed properly to the forms and to truth (as, for example, Pieper and McCoy claim; see Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 82 and McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 179, 182-183). Others, like Rosen, take soul-leading to be oriented primarily toward persuasion; cf. "Platonic Hermeneutics: On the Interpretation of a Platonic Dialogue," *Essays in Philosophy: Ancient*, 362. Against the latter view, see our brief remarks in note 86 above. Still others take it as self-knowledge (see, e.g.,

12. The ambivalence in Socrates’s depictions of language and love—a reflection of Phaedrus’s deeply ambivalent soul—is built into the verb word *psuchagōgia* itself, for, though its roots simply denote the leading (*agein*) of the soul (*psuchē*), the word’s ordinary use in Pre-Platonic discourse had a sinister quality: bewitchment, beguilement, necromancy, the evocation of the dead from Hades, etc.¹⁰¹ As Asmis argues, Socrates initially invites “the reader to understand the term in a pejorative sense” (for the Gorgianic rhetoric Socrates criticizes is, as Gorgias himself well knew, a kind of bewitchment), but, over the course of the discussion of rhetoric, the term’s meaning transforms from “*psychagogia* as beguilement to *psychagogia* as guidance of the soul.”¹⁰² We will confirm and expand Asmis’s point over the course of this

Gordon, *Plato’s Erotic World*, 10, though Gordon’s view isn’t restricted to this point, for she shows that other dialogues indicate that *erōs* leads our souls to our noetic origins and to the practice of philosophy); this, I think, is true, though I argue that self-knowledge is more properly characterized as either coinciding with coming to the ultimate or as a result of coming to the ultimate rather than as a recognition of our inability to do so, as per Griswold, who is most prominent among those who argue for self-knowledge being the primary theme of the dialogue.

¹⁰¹ See Christopher Moore argues in “Socrates *Psychagōgos* (*Birds* 1555, *Phaedrus* 261a7),” *Socratica III: Studies on Socrates, the Socratics, and Ancient Socratic Literature*, eds. Fulvia de Luise and Alessandro Stavru (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2013) for a history of the way in which *psuchagōgia* and related terms are used and change senses over the course of the 5th and 4th centuries. In Plato, the noun is only used in the *Phaedrus* in the two places noted above. Verbal forms appear in the *Laws* (909b) and the *Timaeus* (71a), as well as an adjectival use in the *Minos* (321a). The two uses in *Laws* 909b reflect the traditional usage. The use in *Timaeus* 71a uses the negative sense metaphorically in talking about how images can bewitch us; as we’ll discuss below (especially Ch. 6), there is a way in which Plato invites us to see that though images can be dangerous psychagogues, they needn’t be and aren’t so *per se*. Socrates uses *psuchagōgikōtaton* (the adjectival form in the superlative degree) at *Minos* 321a to characterize tragic poetry. In context, this use also relies on the sense of bewitchment. Moore discusses the Platonic uses (excepting that in the *Minos*), as well as uses of those contemporaneous with Plato, at 46ff. and returns to discuss the uses in the *Phaedrus* at 50ff.

¹⁰² Asmis, “Psychagogia,” 155, 157. For Gorgias’s practice of rhetorical beguilement, see *Praise of Helen* 8-14 (as Asmis discusses; see 155-156). Werner says something similar of love and rhetoric as discussed in the *Phaedrus*; see “Problem of Unity,” 113. By contrast, Moore argues in “Socrates *Psychagōgos*” that “Reading *psychagōgia* as having a laudatory meaning [as Asmis, et al. do] cuts against its older use. To take it as affirmative would, then, require demonstrating both that the term changes in tenor—from obviously negative to always or at least occasionally affirmative—and that Plato approves of the specifically *psychagogic* practice articulated or displayed in the *Phaedrus*. Recent scholarship does not provide such demonstrations” (41). Rather, Moore “argues that even in the *Phaedrus* the term probably retains its derisive, or at least bemused or ironic, connotation” (41-42). Nevertheless, if we accept the distinction between *psuchagōgia* as utilized with reference to its traditional meaning and “soul-leading,” then “what holds of *psychagōgia* [as used in the *Phaedrus* ...] need not hold about ‘leading the soul’. Since the topic of many recent papers is really ‘leading the soul’, their findings, to the extent they are about Socrates’ practice in Plato’s eyes, do not contradict those of this paper” (55). My own view to be

project. Just as Socrates distinguishes a “left-hand love” (symbolized by Lysias’s written speech, which Phaedrus initially hides in his left hand under his cloak; cf. 228d) from a “right-hand love” (266a), so we can distinguish between “left-hand language” (again, symbolized by the hidden speech) and “right-hand language”), as well as between “left-hand soul-leading” (the kind practiced by Lysias in his oratorical fascination, in the etymological sense) and “right-hand soul-leading” (the kind practiced by Socrates). Left-hand soul-leading seeks to enthrall and thereby gain power over the follower (as Socrates’s anti-erotic speech shows); right-hand soul-leading, by contrast, seeks to liberate (cf. 243c, 256b) the soul so that it may flourish. By adopting such a loaded term as *psuchagōgia*, Plato is able to lead the reader, dramatically, from the false and dangerous left-handed practice to the true and beneficial right-handed practice so that the reader may come to a recollection of the truth about love and about language on account of Plato having “led forth (*proagagein*)” the natures of love and language “for all into light (*eis phōs pasin*)” (VII.341d-e). Plato, we might say, utilizes our fear of the quasi-magical dominative power of language and of love to mislead our souls away from their own well-being to open an insight into what should be the greater fear: “the dread of a life without any such magical ‘guidance,’”¹⁰³ of a life wherein all we experience from our fellow human beings and from the divine itself is cold indifference or active hostility rather than caring community.

13. Love accomplishes philosophical soul-leading in two modes: through desire (*erōs* is a species of desire, *epithumia tis*; 237d) and through caring service (*epimeleia, therapeia*). In the

developed in succeeding chapters is that Asmis is correct to think that, in the *Phaedrus* specifically, Plato intends for his audience to understand *psuchagōgia* in the traditional sense on a first pass but for the sense to be transformed retrospectively from the perspective of the whole dialogue.

¹⁰³ Michael Tomko, *Beyond the Willing Suspension of Disbelief: Poetic Faith from Coleridge to Tolkien* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 19. Tomko suggests that we see in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* a particularly apt dramatization of the two sides of soul-leading—magical domination and the cooperative communication of one’s witness to truth—in the two wizards (a word born from roots which mirror those of the Greek *sophistēs* and which mirrors the ambiguity to be found therein between the sage, the philosopher, and the sophist) Saruman and Gandalf, who shape so much of the plot (cf., e.g., 139).

Palinode's myth, the gods lead mortal souls to the "Plain of Truth," the only place where thought can be properly nourished (247d). The soul's thinking capacity yearns for this nourishing vision of what really is. After human souls are incarnated into their mortal forms, their memory of what they'd seen of the true beings begins to dim, and they have difficulty recalling what they'd seen. When a human being is struck by another's beauty and falls in love, however, the experience of beauty reminds the soul of its prenatal vision of Beauty itself. Beauty shines radiantly through *this* beauty, and the lover is led back to Beauty itself in memory by means of this radiant image of Beauty. The experience of love leads the lover back to what's ultimate. In doing so, the experience of love reconnects the lover to the god whom he had followed before his incarnation, and he begins to follow the god once more by trying to take on the god's ways and customs. Upon doing so, the lover becomes like the god he follows. But, since the gods are characterized, in the *Phaedrus*, primarily by their generous non-envy (247a) and their care for all things (246e), so the lover is called to become generously non-envious and to care for his beloved, not simply as an object of desire, but also as a being with intrinsic value who ought to be treated accordingly. In taking on the ways and customs of the god, the lover learns to genuinely serve the beloved (253a, 255a) so that the beloved, too, might take on the ways and customs of the god and likewise begin to follow the god anew. The erotic ascent is *completed* not in the recollection of Beauty, but in the bearing witness to Beauty by caring for the beautiful beloved (by loving the *whole* of Beauty—both Beauty as absolute *and* beauty as relative). When this happens, the beloved, seeing his own beauty reflected to him in the lover's gaze, is likewise transported to Beauty itself, and so is led by love (by a "return-love," *anterōs*, 255e) in the same way in which the lover had been. Beauty and the gods lead the lover, who in turn co-leads the beloved by following the gods in their care for all things. There is more to be said about the ways in which love acts as a soul-leader

(and we will develop the argument of this paragraph in Ch. 4 below), but this brief account of the Palinode's description of psychagogic love should suffice for the point at hand.

14. Language accomplishes philosophical soul-leading through making reality manifest (by "leading forth the nature for all into light") and through persuasion. Socrates suggests that "it seems that in all cases of speaking there would be one and the same art of some kind (if indeed it is an art) which enables someone to make everything similar to everything else, provided that things are comparable and able to be compared and, when someone else makes these similarities but hides the fact that he is doing so, to lead this into light (*eis phōs agein*)" (261e). The art of speaking, then, on account of its orientation to truth, is able to "illuminate" the genuine similarities between things, as well as the deceptive use of such similarities. Likewise, Socrates states that there are "two forms of speech (*rhēthentōn duoin eidoin*) which would not be unpleasant to seize upon" (265c), the first of which is the capacity one has, upon "seeing the many things which have been scattered in all directions, to lead (*agein*) them into a single form (*eis mian ti idean*) so that by defining each thing he makes clear (*dēlon poiēi*) any subject he ever wants to teach (*didaskēin*) about" (265d; trans. modified). Socrates calls the capacity to do so "collection," or—to follow the Greek roots rather than the Latin (collection = *cum* + *legere*, to gather together)—a "leading together" (*sun-agōgōn*, 266b). In speech, we lead together "a plurality of perceptions" through reasoning into a single form (cf. 249b-c). By using speech to collect and divide (the counterpart of collection whereby one distinguishes things "form by form, according to [their] natural joints," 265e)—two speech-acts of which Socrates claims to be a lover (*erastēs*, 266b)—we have the "ability to speak and think" (266b). Speaking is the way by which we cooperate in reality's self-showing.¹⁰⁴ As we will argue in Ch.

¹⁰⁴ Following this line of thought, we begin to approach Gadamer's famous conclusion: "being that can be understood is language" (*Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall [New York:

6, language can do this because it is *essentially* an iconic image, through which the auditor or reader can be led back to the reality imaged (just as we discussed with respect to both philosophy itself and love above). It is only after language “illuminates” truth that language can be *artfully* used for the sake of persuasion. One persuades, ultimately, by “leading around” (*periagōgē*, *Republic* 518c) the soul so that it looks for the illuminating light and sees all there is to see in its light.

§3.4. Incorporating the Remaining Unifiers

15. If the preceding analysis is sound, we’ve shown that soul-leading can incorporate philosophy (soul-leading, we claimed, is the outer disposition of philosophy) as well as love and language (the two ways by which the soul is led to a recognition of reality). Given that dialectics either *is* philosophy (as Schleiermacher takes it to be) or is a particularly philosophical use of language, it would seem that it too has been incorporated. As has writing (Ronna Burger’s contention),¹⁰⁵ given that writing is a mode of language (and perhaps we could say the same of Werner’s suggestion that myth plays a role in thematizing the dialogue, though we’ll have a bit more to say about writing and myth going forward). What awaits discussion, then, are the following candidates for thematic unity: “beauty in every way” (the Neoplatonists, Ficino), recollection (Franz Susemihl), education (Robin Waterfield, Harry Llwyd Hudson-Williams), self-knowledge (Charles Griswold), community (Paul Natorp), and politics (R. P. Winnington-Ingram).¹⁰⁶ While it’s clear that most of these do play some role (community and politics are much less obvious), our point here is not to establish *whether* these themes could

Continuum, 2006], 470). On this point more generally, see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), §7

¹⁰⁵ Ronna Burger, *Plato’s Phaedrus: A Defense of a Philosophic Art of Writing* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁶ About which, see note 62 above.

work as unifiers (especially under the ordinary thematic monist approach), but only to show that soul-leading can incorporate them (hence, even if some of these themes can't properly be said to unify the dialogue, we can still account for their roles in the dialogue by means of their place in soul-leading's "body"—even pinky toes are important for helping the body retain balance).

16. Beauty is, at least in one respect, the centermost concern of the dialogue, for the account of the *radiance* of Beauty itself (250b) and its effects on the lovers' souls straddles the dialogue's midpoint (roughly 252e-253a), which, dramatically, coincides with the sun's zenith (the interlocutors allude to the sun and the time of the day just before and just after the Palinode; 242a, 259a). As we discussed above, the end of philosophical soul-leading is the true beings. The dialogue's emphasis on Beauty's being more visible than the other true beings (250e) and the role that the sight and recollection of Beauty plays in the lovers' drama seems to confirm that suspicion. Beauty is that to which the soul is led when "a guide guides correctly" (*ean orthōs hēgētai ho hēgoumenos*, *Symposium* 210a), as Diotima reveals. Though it is only thematized in the Palinode, the word "beautiful" (*kalon*) shows up roughly once per page (56 times) throughout the dialogue. As we saw, the turn to language is explicitly discussed in terms of beauty (and, as we'll go on to argue, framing normative questions about language in terms of beauty has not merely stylistic but *metaphysical* weight, which hearkens back to the discussion of Beauty itself in the Palinode). Likewise, love is defined in terms of beauty in Socrates's anti-erotic speech (237d, 238b-c). The anti-erotic speeches (as we'll argue in Ch. 2), in their portrayal of left-hand love, disclose a disordered, consumptive relationship to the beloved's corporeal beauty in preference to the Beautiful itself. Artless speech is ugly (*aischros*) speech precisely when it takes itself too seriously ("in the belief that [the] composition contains great lucidity and lasting value," 277d) and fails to recognize that it must point beyond itself to the

truth of which it is an image. Right-hand love leads the lover and beloved to Beauty, and right-hand speech manifests beauty in its form (by radiantly illuminating reality). Beauty, then, is the end of philosophical soul-leading (see especially Ch. 6).

17. While we've so far argued that soul-leading leads to Beauty by way of love and *logos*, and that it does so by means of transporting the follower from images of reality to the reality itself, we've yet to note that this transportation process is what Socrates here and elsewhere calls "recollection" (*anamnēsis*). In the central myth, all souls have always already seen (and come to see, over and over again), the whole of reality (however inadequately); because the souls have already seen the true beings before they came to be incarnated, they are able to recollect them while incarnated. The experience of instantiated beauty is a particularly powerful reminder of Beauty itself, as we've already noted. When the lover loves the beautiful beloved, he is struck by a memory of Beauty itself by means of the beloved's "face, flashing like a lightning bolt" (254b). Likewise, language can also spur recollection: writings serve as reminders (*hypomnēmata*, 275a; recalling 249c, as we'll discuss in Ch. 6), and by engaging in collection and division via language, we attempt to illuminate the forms so that we might "re-view" them. Further, in recollection, we return to the forms in memory; but since the forms are in some sense our true home, recollection takes the form of a return journey (a *nostos*, as when Odysseus sails home to his wife).¹⁰⁷ The true beings are the utmost objects of our desires, and so, by coming back to them, we become whole; we become our truest selves (achieving a certain *entelecheia*, in Aristotle's language). This process of returning to what we've always already known and loved, even if that knowledge and love has been obscured for the entirety of our incarnate lives, *is* education. As Plato puts the point in the *Phaedo*, "learning is nothing

¹⁰⁷ On this and on Plato's way of connecting *nous* and *nostos*, see Gordon, *Plato's Erotic World*, ch. 6.

other than recollection” (72e). As he puts it in the *Republic*, education is the “turning” (*strephein*) or “leading-around” (*periagōgēs*) of the “instrument with which each learns,” together with the whole soul, toward what *is* “until it is able to endure looking at that which *is* and the brightest part of that which *is*. And we affirm that this is the good” (518c-d).¹⁰⁸ For Plato, education is ‘agogic;’ it is the leading around (*periagein*) of one’s natural capacity toward that which the soul truly desires and the elevation (or leading up, *anagein*) thereunto. By being so led, one receives an education about the nature of one’s own desire. In other words, by doing so, the soul comes to know itself. It comes to recognize what kind of thing it is, what its desires mean, and how it might flourish.¹⁰⁹

18. We’ve just argued that soul-leading leads us to Beauty and the other true beings by way of love and language, which both spur us to recollect our prenascent vision of “really real reality,” and that the effect of soul-leading is to educate us about our desires and thus to bring us to self-knowledge; what remains, then, are the two least obvious unifying features: community, and politics. Nevertheless, both do have an important connection to soul-leading. Community is, as we’ll see especially with respect to our discussion of the effects of the Palinodic love relationship (see Ch. 4) a necessary consequence of philosophical soul-leading, for philosophical soul-leading leads each soul to a common “place” (the “place beyond the heavens”) from out of its own particular conditions (as we see in psychagogic rhetoric, which requires the tailoring of the rhetor’s presentation of what’s true to the auditor based on the

¹⁰⁸ Citations of the *Republic* come from Allan Bloom’s translation (Plato, *The Republic of Plato* [New York: Basic Books, 1991]).

¹⁰⁹ Griswold, has, I think, made a very good case for the ubiquity and significance of the self-knowledge theme in the *Phaedrus*. Griswold takes self-knowledge to be an endless, in principle unfinishable task, which concludes (to the extent that it can) with the recognition that human desire always wants a transcendence it cannot actually obtain; the lesson is “the permanence of the erotic *search* for wisdom” (211). We must, therefore, rest content in the striving. However, an alternative understanding of self-knowledge as recognizing the hierarchy of one’s desires and living accordingly will emerge over the course of this study.

auditor's "soul-type"). In the lovers' relationship, we see what we will call "erotic convergence," the way in which lovers are drawn from the experiences of particular beauty to Beauty itself as a common end (or, as per our last paragraph, a common home). By being so drawn, and by following the gods, we become like the gods in their generous non-envy, as we said above. Though mortal souls are inclined to be competitive in their attempts to follow the gods to the superheavenly place (see 248a-b), this is a product of their confusion about the nature of the place where they are going; they don't yet see that there's no need for jealousy or envy, because the superheavenly place and the true beings within it, which are the key to the soul's nourishment and flourishing, aren't the kind of thing that diminishes when appropriated. The forms, unlike corporeal food, do not present themselves to us as a finite commodity in a zero-sum game.¹¹⁰ When we come to realize that we had misunderstood them as such, then we can recognize that the common alignment of our desires needs not instigate competition and strife. Rather, it is by aligning ourselves toward a common, inexhaustible object that we are able to foster community. Philosophical soul-leading leads us to justice, which, because it unites us, is the essential condition of community.¹¹¹ Given that politics is the attempt to organize the city around justice so that it can be unified, we may say that soul-leading contributes to the *salus populi*. In soul-leading, then, we may have an explanation of Socrates's remarkable claim that he is one of the few Athenians who practices true politics

¹¹⁰ On this point, see especially Alessanra Fussi, "'As the Wolf Loves the Lamb': Need, Desire, Envy, and Generosity in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Epoché*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2006)

¹¹¹ Socrates makes an argument to this effect in *Republic* I. Injustice "produces factions, hatreds, and quarrels," whereas "justice "produces unanimity and friendship" (351d). Because injustice divides a community, it renders the community powerless ("unable to accomplish anything in common;" 351e); justice, by contrast, unites a community and makes it able to accomplish the tasks necessary for achieving its end. The fact that philosophical soul-leading leads to justice in the *Phaedrus* can be inferred from the fact that rightly-led souls will seek to become like the gods whom they follow (253a) and that the gods whom they follow are themselves just (for each attends to its own business; 247a, following the definition Socrates gives at *Republic* 433a).

(*Gorgias* 521d). We can, perhaps, read the *Phaedrus*'s closing scene in these terms: having led Phaedrus's soul to a recognition of the truth of the necessity of language's orientation to truth, Socrates sends Phaedrus off to *lead* Lysias into that same recognition; likewise, Socrates is sent off by Phaedrus to lead Isocrates in the same regard (see Ch. 5). As soul-leaders lead members of the community, we have, potentially at least, the transformation of a society from one that is mired in power politics to one that is oriented around justice, goodness, truth, and beauty. The dialogue suggests, then, that soul-leading is marked by a basic *transitivity*: if x successfully leads y, then y now can go forth to lead z (cf. Ch. 4).¹¹²

19. Finally, let us briefly return to writing and myth. If, as we just argued, soul-leading's communal and political effect is the *extension* of philosophy's self-communication which potentially unifies and transforms the city, then we have some warrant for suggesting that writing, myth, and other forms of linguistic codification (like laws) are a further extension of that self-communication *through time*. To the extent that writing, myth, *et alia* can lead the soul, they can continue to do so for future generations who have access to those codifications but not to the original soul-leaders. And this, I claim, is what it is to read a Platonic dialogue: it is to have one's soul led through and by means of the Platonic writing—its drama, its characters, its images, its myths, its arguments—back to the things themselves.¹¹³ Further, given that philosophy is diaphanous with respect to the things themselves in its unflagging witness and self-relativization thereunto, we may be able to make a stronger claim: not only are writing, myth, and other linguistic codifications the self-communication of *philosophy* through time; they

¹¹² Cf. Elizabeth Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art: Love for Wisdom in Four Platonic Dialogues* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 208.

¹¹³ On this point, see especially *Turning Toward Philosophy*, wherein Gordon shows how Plato utilizes the dialogues' features just mentioned to turn the soul toward philosophy and, ultimately, to the realities for which we have erotic yearning. See also Osborne, "Seduction of the Word," 263-264, 276-277.

are also, in a sense, the means by which the ultimate things communicate themselves through time. Language, as we will go on to argue, is the radiance of the forms as it has been appropriated and “co-expressed” through history.

§4. Nonthematic Unity

§4.1. Verbal Texture: The Semantic Network of *Psuchagōgia*

1. In the last section, we made a conceptual argument that soul-leading could accommodate all of the various contenders proposed for thematic monism by incorporating them into a common body (roughly, the acts, ways, ends, and effects of philosophical practice, especially as seen from the perspective of a non-philosopher like Phaedrus). But, without adducing a different kind of evidence, such an argument must remain speculative (perhaps all these concepts do fit together in the way that I suggest, but why should the reader think that Plato intended us to see them in such a light?). In this section, I will offer a second kind of evidence for my claim that soul-leading is the incorporating theme of the *Phaedrus*, and I will do so on “nonthematic” grounds.

2. As we saw in our review of Werner’s exposition of the unity problem (§2.2), there is no incompatibility between thematic and nonthematic approaches to unifying the dialogue, especially given that the *Phaedrus* is a dramatic work (indeed, one of the most self-consciously dramatic of Plato’s dialogues). It’s abundantly clear that the dialogue is unified nonthematically in many ways: there are consistent characters, who drive a consistent (if somewhat surprising and perhaps off-puttingly-structured) plot, within an unbroken temporality and spatiality (for the dialogue’s temporal and spatial motions are continuous). Many images and turns of phrase

recur in interesting ways in significant places in the dialogue.¹¹⁴ For example, consider the play on the language of “feasting”, which is used only twice in the *Phaedrus*: first Lysias had been “feasting” (*beistia*, 227b) Phaedrus on speeches all morning in the dialogue’s prologue; later, in the Palinode, the souls who’ve ascended to the superheavenly place “feast” (*bestiatheisa*, 247e) on the true beings and are nourished thereby. The repetition of the language and imagery invites comparison of the respective feasts (as we shall argue in Ch. 2, Lysianic “feasting” is akin to the wolf’s adoration of the lamb [241d], whereas the Palinode’s depiction of feasting on reality amounts to a kind of community-building spiritual communion with reality itself). Likewise, as Marina McCoy has noted, the dialogue is framed by discussions of movement:¹¹⁵ the dialogue opens with Socrates’s request to know from whence Phaedrus has come and whither he is going (*poi de kai pothen*, 227b), and it closes with Socrates’s exhortation for them to go back to town together (*iomen*, 279c) to tell their beloveds about that which they learned from the gods of the place. Likewise, near the middle of the dialogue, we get a demonstration of the soul’s immortality specifically in terms of its self-motion. The frequency of descriptions of motion is something we will continue to consider, especially insofar as we continue to see motion presented in terms of leading and following.

3. Plato, however, employs more significant—because less immediately integral to the basic criteria of poetics—ways of nonthematically unifying the dialogue: in addition to *dramatizing* (or enacting) soul-leading,¹¹⁶ the dialogue also reinforces the significance of soul-

¹¹⁴ See Lebeck, “Central Myth,” for a thorough examination of repeated imagery and language.

¹¹⁵ McCoy, “Love and Soul-Leading.”

¹¹⁶ The final decades of 20th century Plato scholarship were marked by a renewed interest in the dramatic form as philosophically relevant to the presentation of the dialogue’s philosophical content. We already discussed the reasons the Neoplatonist *Prolegomena* gave for the dramatic form (that Plato adopts the dialogue form as part of an *imitatio Dei* and on account of the way in which it allows for a kind of “fictive realism” in the portrayal of the philosophical life—to which we might add the anonym’s suggestion that Plato “chose this form of writing because he did not want to hand over [*paradōi*] the matters to be

leading by means of its frequent deployment of what I'm calling 'agogic' (or 'leading') language: *agein* (to lead), *agein*-compounds, terms etymologically connected to *agein* (such as *hēgesthai*, to [be led to] consider), and semantically connected words (such as *hepasthai*, to follow). My guiding suspicion is that attentiveness to the linguistic resonances (what Werner calls "verbal texture") in the Greek will lead us to see that the dialogue prepares us for and reinforces the centrality of *psuchagogia*—only formally introduced near the dialogue's two-thirds' mark—by means of its uncharacteristically common use of the semantic network of "leading" and "following" terms throughout the dialogue.¹¹⁷ Stephen Scully has formulated the general point well:

discussed [*ta pragmata*] naked and bare [*psila (...) kai gumna*] of what's presented to the eye [*prosōpōn*; IV.15.20-22]; my translation). For general treatments of a dramatically-oriented hermeneutics of the dialogue form, see especially Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, as well as Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, Ch. 1 and Jacob Klein, *Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 1-3. Desjardins has rightly argued that Plato adopts the dramatic form for philosophical reasons and that it is required by his epistemology; see "Why Dialogues?" 119-122 and *Plato and the Good*, 217ff. Ferrari has made a compelling case for the relevance of the dramatic background to the *Phaedrus*'s foreground, for while the discussion articulates the matter at hand, the background showcases it; the dialogue is not exhausted by what is said but also makes claims in what it shows; see *Listening to the Cicadas*, 22ff. Schindler, agreeing with both Desjardins and Ferrari, further argues that the dialogues present *dramatic* arguments which require *both* a saying *and* a showing; see *Plato's Critique*, 33. Schindler has also noted that while dramatically-oriented readers are right in many of their claims about the relevance of the drama to the dialogue's concerns (e.g., that the drama invites us to participate in the discussion, that it invites our questioning response, etc.), the tendency to take the dramatic form as indicating that there is a non-discursive insight to be garnered which *cannot* be put into discursive propositions (common to those who see in Plato a "tragic" or "weak" view of reason, such as Hyland, Roochnik, and Griswold) is misguided. Rather, the dialogues communicate non-discursive insights which are, as the dramatists recognize, irreducible to discursive formulation, but nevertheless communicable (however inadequately) in discursive form; see *Plato's Critique*, 30-33 and McCoy, *Image and Argument in Plato's Republic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020), 224-225 (likewise, Eric Perl, *Thinking Being: Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition* [Boston: Brill, 2014], 19-20). As we will see (especially in Ch. 6), discursive language can mediate one's reception of a non-discursive insight, irreducible to discursive propositions, on account of the way in which language functions as a kind of soul-leading "iconic image" of reality.

¹¹⁷ Gordon notes that the "*Phaedrus* thematizes leading and being led by the proper guides as a way to self-knowledge," though she confines her treatment of the matter to the dialogue's prologue (*Plato's Erotic World*, 10).

The *Phaedrus* is no less a work of art than a philosophical text, and a full reading of the dialogue requires literary skills of tracing verbal repetition and imagistic patterning. As with poetry, word and image gain in meaning as they re-echo in the dialogue.¹¹⁸

Let us, then, track the “re-echoing” of the agogic language Plato deploys in order to prepare for and inflect his introduction of *psuchagogia* toward the end of the dialogue.

4. Agogic language is used more times per page in the *Phaedrus* than in any other dialogue.¹¹⁹ In absolute terms, agogic language is used more times in the *Phaedrus* than in any other dialogue except for the *Republic* and the *Laws*, both of which are many times longer than the *Phaedrus* (the *Republic* is about 5.19 times longer, and the *Laws* is about 6.17 times longer). *Agein*, the verbal root of *psuchagogia* and a common word in everyday Attic, is used 24 times (in addition to a single use of the closely related *agōgē*), significantly more times per page than we see in other dialogues.¹²⁰ *Agein*-compounds are used an additional 24 times in the *Phaedrus*: *apagein* (to lead away, to carry off, to bring home), *anagein* (to lead up, to take up from the coast to the town), *sunagein* (to lead with, to bring together), and *sunagōgē* (collection, a leading

¹¹⁸ Scully, *Phaedrus*, 89. See also Lebeck, “Central Myth,” 272, note 12. “Plato, in a manner similar to the dramatists, uses thematic repetition as a means of keeping certain ideas before the reader.” The everyday senses of many of the *agein*-compounds we will be discussing are often somewhat removed from their etymological senses (e.g., *diagein* generally means to pass time or to live a certain way, but given the fact that it is surrounded by etymologically connected terms, we might upon reflection hear the etymological sense of leading-through and come to see that that etymological sense is also relevant to the points at hand; cf. Ch. 3).

¹¹⁹ To gather the data for this and related claims, I used Perseus’s word study tool. See the appendix to this project for a table of the uses of agogic language in the *Phaedrus*. A ordering of the dialogues by word count has been charted by John Ziolkowski; see *Plato’s Similes: A Compendium of 500 Similes in 35 Dialogues* (Washington DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2014), accessible via <https://plato.chs.harvard.edu/chartD>.

¹²⁰ For example, searching for *agein* via Perseus’s word study tool yields nearly 100 hits in both the *Laws* and the *Republic*, almost 4 times as many uses as in the *Phaedrus*, but in dialogues which are 6.17 times and 5.19 times longer. The nearly 100 raw hits would, presumably, shrink a bit after verification of each instance since the word study tool flags other words which share forms with *agein* (e.g., *agaō*, *axia*, and *agōn*). Searching for *agein* in the *Phaedrus* yields 41 hits despite the fact that there are only 24 uses of *agein* in the *Phaedrus*. The *Phaedrus*’s 24 genuine uses surpass the unfiltered number of uses in all of the other dialogues (excepting *Laws* and *Republic*), even though 10 of the 32 remaining dialogues are longer than the *Phaedrus*. There is also a textual variant in the *Phaedrus* that could raise the number of uses of *agein* to 25; cf. Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, 232, note 48 on 255a.

together) are all used once, as are the closely related pair *katagōgē* and *katagōgion* (resting place, a leading down); *xenagein* (to lead a stranger or a mercenary), *paragein* (to lead alongside, to mislead), *periagein* (to lead around, to turn about), and *psuchagōgia* are each used twice; *proagein* (to lead forth, but also to “procure” a sexual object for someone, to pimp, to pander) is used four times; and *diagein* (to live, to pass time, to lead through) is used seven times. Of those compounds, *katagōgē*, *katagōgion*, *xenagein*, and *psuchagōgoa* are used by Plato only in the *Phaedrus*.¹²¹ The dialogue thus boasts not only a higher frequency of, but also a more varied use of, agogic language than what appears in other dialogues. Additionally, there are etymologically related words, such as *hēgemōn* (leader, ruler) and *hēgemonikos* (leader-like), which are each used once, *hegeisthai* (to [be led to] think), which is used 24 uses (though all but one of the uses [247a] need not invoke the etymological reference to leading), and *diēgēsis* (a narrative, a leading-through), which is used twice.¹²²

5. To complement the agogic language, Plato also frequently deploys words for “following.” *Akolouthēin* (to follow) is used twice, *epakolouthēin* (to follow closely behind) is used once, *diōkein* (to pursue) is used five times, and *hepasthai* (to follow) is used thirteen times. Both uses of *akolouthēin* show up in Lysias’s speech, which is otherwise devoid—fittingly, as we’ll discuss (Ch. 2)—of all language of leading and following. All but two of the uses of *hepasthai* appear in Socrates’s two speeches (the other two occur in rapid succession during the interlude between Lysias’s and Socrates’s anti-erotic speeches at 234d); the single use of *ephepein* (*epi* + *hepasthai*) also occurs in the Palinode. Likewise, four of the five uses of *diōkein* are

¹²¹ On the Platonic uses of the verbal and adjectival equivalents to *psuchagōgia*, see note 101 above.

¹²² There are other, more general verbs of motion used throughout the dialogue, and some of them could contextually take on the sense of leading and following, such as when Socrates uses *poreuesthai* (to go) when he says “the great leader (*ho megas hēgemōn*) in heaven, Zeus, takes the lead (*prōtos poreuetai*; i.e., ‘goes first’), driving a winged team [...]. An army of gods and daemons follow (*hepetai*) him” (246e). We will confine our analysis to words more directly connected (lexically, semantically) to *agein*.

reserved for Socrates's speeches. The remaining use of *diōkein* occurs at 266b, when Socrates says he would pursue a dialectician as if he were a god. This last occurrence of *diōkein*, alongside Socrates's use of *epakolouthein* at 271e to characterize the true rhetorician's capacity to follow in perception the ways in which different types of souls are or are not persuaded by different types of speeches, are the only occurrences of the "following" terms that appear after the Palinode. The majority of the agogic terms are likewise concentrated in Socrates's two speeches, but they also show up very frequently in the prologue and often in the second half (where nearly all of their uses are highly significant for that section's claims about the nature of language). The distribution of agogic terms falls nearly evenly into the dialogue's three parts.¹²³ All but five of the various words for leading and following are spoken by Socrates (in addition to the two uses of *akolouthein* which show up in Lysias's speech, Phaedrus uses *proagein* and *xenagein* once each in the prologue and later uses *paragein* at 261a).

6. The preceding paragraphs should be sufficient to establish the fact that Plato thoroughly imbues the *Phaedrus* with the language of leading and following. The fact that the prologue contains so many uses of agogic terminology (10 uses over four Stephanus pages) with such a variety (four uses of *proagein*, two uses of *agein*, two uses of the rare *xenagein*, one use of *periagein*, and one use of the rare *katagōgē*), coupled with the fact that Plato habitually "frontloads" his prologues with his primary themes (often in such a way that we cannot see the allusions for what they are until after we have seen the whole dialogue),¹²⁴ should on its own be sufficient to alert us to the relevance of leading and following to the *Phaedrus*, a

¹²³ Agogic language is used in the first part [roughly 227a-244a] 19 times, in the second part [roughly 244a-259d] 17 times, and in the final part [roughly, 259d-279c] 15 times. Words for following are less evenly distributed given that they are largely confined to the Socratic speeches: in the first part, *hepesthai* is used 5 times, *diōkein* thrice, *akolouthein* twice, and *helkein* once; in the second part, *hepesthai* is used 9 times, *diōkein* once, and *helkein* twice; in the final part *diōkein* is used once.

¹²⁴ See, Lebeck, "Central Myth," 283: the prologue is a "dramatic enactment of the myth."

suspicion that only gets deepened when we see agogic language being used so frequently in Socrates's two speeches, and a suspicion that must be confirmed by the time we get to the surprising uses of *psuchagogia* toward the end of the dialogue.¹²⁵ The more important question, however, is *why* does Plato inscribe the ideas of leading and following so thoroughly into the dialogue and call our attention to the fact that he has done so by using rare terms and periphrastic or reduplicative phrasing?¹²⁶ How does deploying the semantic network of leading and following further Plato's aims in this dialogue? A satisfactory answer to the latter question is not one that can be given here but must emerge over the course of our study; nevertheless, we can characterize a few ways in which this semantic network is utilized over the course of the dialogue and try to draw out a few preliminary features of Plato's use. We will do so by indicating the questions that Plato seems to raise for his reader by means of the frequent use of the semantic network of leading and following.

7. *Where have I come from and where am I going (227a)? Under the leadership of whom (or of what) am I undertaking this journey?* When we first meet Phaedrus, he is already on the move. Socrates

¹²⁵ On the paradoxical nature of beginnings in general, and on Plato's use of them, see Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 41-46. Schindler suggests that the way in which Plato's beginnings presuppose an end which they cannot adequately showcase without reference to the whole is, we might say, an *inscription* of the Platonic notion of recollection. See also Gordon's reflection on the significance of the prologue's use of agogic language in *Plato's Erotic World*, 168.

¹²⁶ For example, consider what Socrates says immediately after Phaedrus has finished reciting Lysias's speech: "Indeed, divinely spirited, my dear companion; naturally I'm stunned. And I suffered this on account of you, Phaedrus, because while I was looking at you reading, you seemed lit up by the speech. Thinking that you were led to perceive [*hēgoumenos*] such matters better than I, I followed you [*heipomēn*], and following [*hepomenos*], I was caught up in a Bacchic frenzy with you, a divine source" (234d; translation modified). The repetition of "follow" ("I followed, and following," *heipomēn, kai hepomenos*) in the last sentence draws attention given the fact that Socrates could have omitted the participle (*kai hepomenos*). These two uses of *hepesthai* are the first uses of *hepesthai* in the dialogue; shortly thereafter, Socrates will use the term frequently in his anti-erotic speech (and again in the *Palinode*). We can see in Socrates's playful response to Phaedrus's enthusiasm for Lysias's speech a thematic prelude to much of what will be discussed in the *Palinode*, which spends most of its time discussing how souls will follow the gods to the sight of Beauty and the divine source which they yearn to see, and which discusses love as something which causes one to be stunned, driven out of one's self on account of the brightness of Beauty radiating in and through the beloved's flashing face.

inaugurates their discussion by asking Phaedrus to reflect on his movement: from whence has he come, and whither is he going? As Plato reveals over the course of the dialogue, there is much more at stake in this question than Phaedrus, who responds with a quotidian account of his day's events, realizes, for, in light of the text to come, we see that Socrates is asking about the *ultimate* whence and whither of the soul.¹²⁷ Where does the soul come from, and where is it going? Where does it yearn to go? What will help it get there, and what will prevent it from doing so? In what ways are the soul's prehistory (its original "whence") relevant to its current trajectory?

8. Phaedrus has come from spending the morning with Lysias, feasting on Lysias's speeches in Morychus's house (in the house of a man known to all Athenians as a consummate glutton). He's urged Lysias to read and reread a piece of epideictic rhetoric "somehow on love," so that Phaedrus might memorize it and try it out on others. Exhausted by concentrating all morning, Phaedrus goes for a walk in the covered colonnades, according to the wisdom of the doctor Akoumenos, the father of one of Phaedrus's love interests (Eryximachos).

9. Socrates thus meets a Phaedrus who is already moving under guidance. He's bewitched by Lysias's rhetorical power to beautify speech and to convince people of whatever he wishes, even outlandish things. He's following the doctor's orders on how to regain his stamina so that he might further try his hand at speech-craft. Is this guidance reducible to a pleasurable morning's dalliances? No. As we learn more about Phaedrus, we come to see that he has a long-term interest in speeches and speech-making. This *philologia* (love of speeches) is ambiguous, and it is unclear whether in Phaedrus we see a mere speech-lust or something

¹²⁷ See, e.g., Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 107-108.

open to a deeper concern with *logos* as that which manifests and reveals reality. Phaedrus himself is likewise ambiguous (257b).

10. When we start to look at Phaedrus's journey through the dialogue, accompanying Socrates as he does to the supernatural grove to hear divinely-inspired discourses, we are prompted to see Phaedrus as a mirror for ourselves. By highlighting Phaedrus's offstage guidance and then thematizing the language of leading in the prologue, Plato is inviting us to reflect on ourselves. Where have we come from, and where are we going? What in our past indelibly shapes us and sets us on our course of life? Around what do we orient our lives? What has led us to this orientation? (And, it is worth noting, to think we have no life orientation is to allow ourselves to be passive to the most immediate and forceful soul-leaders around us: public opinion, what we've "always done," what's current, advertisement and propaganda, those who make strong claims on us, such as family members, friends, and other loved ones, etc.).

11. *Who is a suitable guide?* After Socrates gets an initial report of Phaedrus's morningtide activity, the pair set off out of town, ultimately to come to the bower which acts as the background against which almost the entirety of their conversation is set. As they are walking, the pair trade requests to lead each other on, each playfully urging the other to lead the way. Now that Phaedrus has left the urbanity of the city, wherein Lysianic cleverness thrives, for the simplicity of the countryside, he has come under a new guide: Socrates.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Commentators tend to assume that Phaedrus is leading Socrates to somewhere unfamiliar to him (as suggested by Socrates's remark about how Phaedrus has been a good stranger's guide; *xenagein*, 230b), even though Socrates clearly shows more familiarity with the area (since he, unlike Phaedrus, knows where Boreas's abduction took place; see 229b-c). Osborne notes that Socrates's deme is "located just across the Ilissus valley," on account of which, Socrates "probably walked this way daily" ("Seduction of the Word," 268, note 9). Accordingly, despite Socrates's protestations to ignorance, he is, in this case, a suitable guide to the countryside and perhaps even to whatever dwells therein.

12. Socrates wastes no time in undermining the suitability of Lysias as a guide, and in doing so, implicitly suggests to Phaedrus that he needs to think more carefully about how he has been led and about whom he should be following. Lysias, Socrates suggests, benefits the haves rather than the have-nots who actually could benefit from Lysias's word-turning craft (227c-d). Socrates implies that Lysianic guidance doesn't actually help the city in any way; he's misusing his rhetorical gifts, such as they are. He lines his pockets by being a ghostwriter rather than using his skill to bring the *polis* into greater harmony by swaying the wealthy and the young to attend to the needs of the poor and the old. By allowing Lysias to lead him, Phaedrus is in danger of becoming apolitical and neglectful of filial bonds; worse still, he's in danger of taking up his master's contemptuous relationship to truth, the only thing by which the highest part of the soul can be nourished. Given the fate of the historical Phaedrus, who went on to commit sacrilege before being exiled, the original audience would have been in a position to recognize the severity of the danger of being led by Lysias.

13. If one shouldn't be led by Lysias or others who seem, like Thasymachos and the sophists generally, to absolutize money and power in the name of their own satiation, then by whom should one be led? The dialogue's implicit answer is paradoxical. If Phaedrus were convinced by Socrates not to follow Lysias, he would, in being so convinced, have started following Socrates. Indeed, the dialogue sets up Socrates as an alternative, superior guide to Lysias (as well as to Akoumenos, for the doctor can only regulate the well-being of the body, whereas the philosopher can, perhaps, regulate the well-being of the soul). But, unlike Lysianic leading, Socratic leading doesn't terminate in Socrates. Rather, Socrates leads by himself being led (as we see dramatically with the frequent interruptions of the divine, which reshape Socrates's way forward, and as we see mythically in the Palinode's description of the lover leading the beloved into his own way of being led by the god whom they jointly follow). The

dialogue begins, after all, with Socrates being led by Phaedrus to the grove and following Phaedrus wherever he goes on account of Phaedrus's brightness (cf. 234d). But Socrates himself soon comes under the guidance of the gods. He petitions the Muses to lead him through his anti-erotic speech (*Agete de, o Mousai*, 237a) and soon comes under the influences of the nymphs and other local deities. He later mythically describes the way in which the Olympian gods lead mortal souls to the Plain of Truth, subtly implying that he was among those in Zeus's retinue (cf. 250b). Lovers, it seems, come to lead their beloveds by themselves being led by the gods. Socratic guidance is a mediation of divine guidance rather than something that stems from Socrates alone. As Jill Gordon puts it, "Socrates argues and implies in myriad ways that the gods are the best leaders of souls, but that true lovers are the best mortal guides."¹²⁹

14. Our question of who makes for a suitable guide, then, is not as easy as just finding the one who is wise and can teach us what we want to know. The suitable guide may turn out to be the one who *knows* that he isn't, in fact, adequate, for Socrates does not himself know the way (though, as we shall see, there is more to the story here, and if we stopped here, we would be doing a disservice both to Socrates and to the nature of reality).

15. *What do I want? To where do I want to be led?* Once we are prompted to think about how we are guided in our own lives, we are likely to fall into a crisis of leadership. We need to figure out who will actually lead us to where we want to go, and we need to determine who will lead us astray. We've just suggested that part of human thrownness is to be always already under the competing leadership of various guiding forces (including not only our interpersonal relationships, but also our culture and traditions and all that goes into making up our culture

¹²⁹ Gordon, *Plato's Erotic World*, 168.

and traditions). Our choice in following one guiding force or another can have a tremendous impact on our prospects for flourishing. As we'll go on to see, the dialogue suggests that the highest states of flourishing available to us are not attainable by us via our own unaided efforts (for the gods have to *lead* us to the Plain of Truth, wherein we are nourished). The continuous use of the language of leading and following contributes (as we'll argue) to the dialogue's larger contention that human nature is un-self-sufficient with respect to its flourishing in a remarkable way. In order to be *led* into flourishing, the soul must take on the more receptive role of following and be open to having its communion with reality be mediated (as by the gods). As we'll go on to discuss, we can ourselves mediate for each other what we mediately receive. But given our self-insufficiency, the crisis of leadership which we are bounded to experience becomes all the more urgent.

16. In order to determine which guides to follow we need a criterion of adjudication. This prompts us to take a step back and look into ourselves. We must ask what it is, in fact, that we want. Only when we know the end (what we want) can we determine a viable means (the guidance). When we haven't yet determined some kind of hierarchy of desires, we can easily be exploited by any who hold before us something desirable. Just as Socrates claims that Phaedrus has found a drug for enticing him out of the city and could lead him around all of Attica, like an animal being led by a piece of food (230d), so we are liable to be led by *whatever* entices us when we haven't yet considered the nature of the desires we experience. If one becomes, as Phaedrus hopes to become (228a), a master of language, whereby one can in turn lead others according to one's whims, will one become happy in the process? The Palinode, at least, will claim that one won't be able to lead-through (*diagein*) a life of flourishing without a

commitment to something deeper and more real than the sheer mineness of the life of having power over others.

17. *What leads me (internally) to act as I do?* The last few questions are set up in the drama of the prologue and continue to reverberate throughout the whole dialogue. The latter question, however, quickly gets thematized in the dialogue's three speeches on love. When we ask "what do I want," we are prompted to reflect on ourselves in an effort to try to come to know ourselves. Knowing ourselves doesn't simply mean knowing what's going on in us, or knowing our various preferences and moods; rather, knowing ourselves means knowing what kind of things we *are*, what's "built in" and ineradicable. As we've already seen, the dialogue forces us to reflect on our thrownness (where have we come from and where are we going) and on the various influences that orient us (whether recognized or unconsciously) toward a certain "whither." Since we are beings of a certain type who live under the aspect of a certain "facticity," we need to come to an awareness of the condition in which we find ourselves. Which elements of that "facticity" are contingent, and which are essential? Which are changeable and which are not? To what extent can we actively hinder our flourishing by acting as if the unchangeable were changeable (or vice versa)? By acting as if the essential were contingent (again, or vice versa)?

18. The three speeches take up these questions and in doing so work toward developing an anthropology. By developing an anthropology, an account of what it is to be human, we get resources for analyzing our question about what we want—and what we *should* want if we want to be led into flourishing. While we will leave the details of the speeches' anthropologies for later (particularly Ch. 2, but ongoing into later chapters), a couple remarks about the relevance of agogic language for those anthropologies is warranted here. First, it

should be noted that Lysias uses no agogic terms; the only semantically connected term he uses is *akolouthēin* (to follow, used nowhere else in the dialogue), and when he uses it, he does so with a sneer. As we'll go on to claim, Lysias's speech is "anti-agogic," and his lack of agogic language reflects the rationalist egoist anthropology he presupposes (but does not explicitly develop). By contrast, Socrates's anti-erotic speech and the Palinode are jam-packed with agogic language.¹³⁰ Second, the anti-erotic speech dramatizes a kind of "civil war" in the soul—particularly by means of its frequent use of agogic language—wherein different principles (the desire for pleasure and acquired opinion about what's best) vie for the internal leadership of the soul. The soul's trajectory will be significantly altered depending on which principle gains the upper hand, for if right opinion leads, the soul will be moderate, but if desire for pleasure leads, the soul becomes hubristic, violent, and dangerous. The anti-erotic speech offers no resolution; the civil war is, it would seem, permanent. The Palinode, by contrast, resolves this civil war by offering a third leading principle (reason) which, somewhat surprisingly, leads the soul not by acting of its own accord (as the anti-erotic speech's two motive principles try to do) but instead by itself being led (just as the philosopher leads by herself being led). The agogic language in the Palinode tends not to be used, as it had in the anti-erotic speech, to dramatize the soul's inner workings (that is, to some extent, offloaded to other terms, such as *hēniōchēsis*, the reining of horses, per the mythical image developed in the Palinode), but instead is used in relation to what the whole soul follows—the gods.

¹³⁰ In the anti-erotic speech, which takes up only four Stephanus pages, we see eight uses of *agein*, one use of *agōgē*, three uses of *hepesthai*, and three uses of *diōkein*. In the much longer Palinode, we see five uses of *agein* (one of which is coupled with *anō*), five uses of *diagein*, one use of *periagein*, the sole use of *sunagein*, the sole use of *hēgemonikos*, the sole use of *hēgemōn*, one use of *diēgēsis*, eight uses of *hepesthai*, the sole use of *ephepein*, and one use of *diōkein*.

19. *What leads me (externally) to act as I do?* If the anti-erotic speech uses agogic language to prompt us to ask about the inner workings of our souls and what vies for leadership therein, the Palinode, by contrast, prompts us to ask about the orienting principles external to the soul, which lead the whole soul to its desired ends. When desire for pleasure or acquired opinion gain the lead, they certainly lead us toward various objects external to us (the object of pleasure, public opinion or whatever public opinion dictates is acceptable), but in doing so, neither is ever truly satisfied (the desire for pleasure must go from one object to the next; acquired opinion must be constantly vigilant that it remains orthodox and thus must follow the shifting crowds wherever they lead). By contrast, as we suggested above and will argue in greater detail later on, reason leads by being led. Because the Palinode resolves the civil war for internal leadership by underscoring the necessity of harmonizing the whole soul under reason (and the consequences for failing to do so), it shifts its agogic focus away from internal leadership to external leadership. When a soul is rightly ordered (i.e., when reason “takes the rein”), it follows the divine to the only place wherein reason can itself be nourished, the “Plain of Truth,” where the true beings reside.

20. By emphasizing the role of following the gods, the Palinode prompts us to take up, once again, the questions of whither we should be led and who is suitable to guide us there; it also reinforces our self-insufficiency and our need for aid in coming to the highest possibilities of flourishing available to us. The Palinode argues that only that which is divine (or, at least, divinely-oriented) can lead us to that which we truly desire. The anthropological reflections of the anti-erotic speech are recast in the Palinode, which claims that the soul has to get itself in order internally and direct itself rightly externally in order to flourish. To the extent that we fail to set ourselves on a path toward the right end (which would be equivalent

to saying that we failed to follow the gods where they lead), we lead-through an inferior life (according to the criteria given to us by the very nature of our desire, which can only be adequately fulfilled when the whole soul is fulfilled, and the whole soul can't be fulfilled unless reason is fulfilled).

21. *How do we lead each other?* The dialogue as a whole suggests, as we saw, that we are always already situated within a network of leading-relationships, where in some cases we are leading others and in other cases we are ourselves being led. As we already discussed in a preliminary way (§3.3), the dialogue singles out two particular ways in which we are so enmeshed: language and love. Both language and love can lead us to our doom and to our greatest flourishing. Love and language are the primary ways by which we are set on whatever path we happen to be on, and they are the primary ways by which we can be oriented anew (whether for good or for ill). Socrates's two speeches on love showcase the ways in which love can lead us well or ill in the midst of their development of an 'agogic' anthropology. The remainder of the dialogue following the Palinode discusses the ways in which language can do the same. While the prologue and the three speeches on love showcase the ways in which language can lead the soul for better or for ill, it is only the dialogue's latter discussion of the norms for beautiful language that we get a thematic discussion of interpersonal leading and the effects we can have on each other in our ordinary everydayness.

22. We are always each other's psychagogues, for better or for worse; by the time that we get to the dialogue's utilization of *psuchagogia*, the continual repetition of the themes and language which now emerge into the foreground have prepared us to interrogate ourselves about our interpersonal relationships: do we seek to beguile, or do we seek to lead others forth into the liberating truth? Socrates's parting exhortation for the pair to go back to Athens to

lead their beloveds into the initiation into the truth into which they themselves were led applies to the reader as much as it applies to the dialogue's characters. We too are 'apostolically' sent forth to our own Athens to lead others into a comprehensive orientation toward truth.

§4.2. The Structure of the Dialogue Revisited: Plato's Triptych

23. Before leaving nonthematic considerations of unity, it is worth briefly reflecting on the dialogue's structure, for its structure is also significant to the claims we have already made and the claims we will make in what's to come. Ordinarily, the dialogue is taken to consist of two halves, one devoted to love (the Palinode and all that comes before it) and the other devoted to rhetoric (everything that comes after the Palinode). We've already seen that there is ample reason to think that the primary theme of each "half" is not restricted to that half. Nevertheless, even scholars who themselves note the dialogue's broader connections still take the dialogue, as Anne Lebeck says, to be "in the form of a diptych, one side depicting the nature of real love, the other of true rhetoric."¹³¹ By contrast, Scully suggests that it "might be more reasonable to think of the *Phaedrus* as a triptych, the palinode framed on either side by rhetorical considerations."¹³²

24. Like Scully, I think the dialogue divides more naturally into thirds than halves, for the Palinode does stand out from the rest of the dialogue in terms of its character and its length. If we take the Palinode in conjunction with the third interlude (257b-259e), which acts as both the transition to the later discussion about the norms of beautiful speaking and as the

¹³¹ Lebeck, "Central Myth," 268.

¹³² Scully, *Phaedrus*, 86. Scully suggests that the diptych-structuring "lumps the three speeches into one, as if the palinode were of a piece with the other two, when in fact it jumps out at the reader for its fervor and its myth in the midst of a surrounding sobriety. Indeed, it is different form almost all other Platonic writing."

dialogue's immediate reflection on the merits of the Palinode,¹³³ and separate that combined section from the rest, then we are left with three roughly equal sections of the dialogue,¹³⁴ within which there is decent internal unity. Though Lebeck takes the dialogue to be a diptych, she rightly notes that "The [Palinode's] myth forms a central point to which every idea in *Phaedrus* is related and should be referred."¹³⁵

25. Werner has levied a number of objections to such an elevation of the Palinode.¹³⁶ Elevating the Palinode's significance seems to degrade the significance of the other parts of the dialogue, especially in those cases wherein the commentator takes the Palinode to be the "true teaching," which the rest of the dialogue enfolds as some kind of ultimately unnecessary shell. Doing so is a violence to the rest of the text, and it contradicts key evidence.¹³⁷ The themes in section of the dialogue that follows the Palinode are hardly secondary in importance, and the dialogue brings into explicit consideration two new themes in the latter section: the method of collection and division and writing. "If," Werner suggests, "the palinode were truly

¹³³ We will later discuss the function of the myth of the Cicadas and its relationship to the Palinode, but let it suffice for the moment to note that commentators frequently take the myth to be a reflection on the Palinode. Among those who take the myth to be such a reflection, the prominent ones (e.g., Ferrari, Griswold) take it to be a warning against an uncritical reception of the Palinode. By contrast, Terence Sweeney suggests that the myth is presented as much more ambiguous: "the cicadas represent a *pharmakon* because they show the dangerous similarity between the Sirens and Muses. Importantly though, Socrates does not claim they should flee. Rather, the way they navigate is what determines whether the *pharmakon* heals or kills. The key is in how one receives and partakes of the song; this is what determines if what the cicadas offer is gift or doom" ("Pedagogical Settings of the *Phaedrus*: A Community in Nature with the Divine," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, vol. 23, no. 23 [2020], 101). We'll discuss Sweeney's more positive read on the Cicadas later on.

¹³⁴ Doing so makes the middle and last thirds roughly equal in space (35%), though the first third would thereby be slightly shorter (30%). Though this is a rough cut, it is closer to a clean cut than is the usual division (58%/42%).

¹³⁵ Lebeck, "Central Myth," 268. See likewise Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, xiv, 42.

¹³⁶ See Werner, "Problem of Unity," 104-105.

¹³⁷ Cf. Dorter, "Imagery and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1971), 287: "In view of [Dorter's account of the significance of the imagery of the setting and the oaths sworn in the prologue], it seems that any attempt to understand the palinode independently of what precedes it would be radically incomplete. But until one has followed the path laid down by the imagery, this relationship remains camouflaged by the surface conversation." We'll discuss the scenery in depth in Ch. 5.

intended to be the ‘most important’ part of the dialogue, then it seems unlikely that Plato would go out of his way to avoid talking about collection and division and writing within the speech.”¹³⁸ Further, elevating the Palinode would seem to ignore the dialogue’s suggestions that the Palinode’s content is itself not authoritative or definitive (at 246a, Socrates promises only to give an image of the soul, not its true nature; at 265b-c, Socrates suggests that the Palinode was playful and only partially true; we might further add that the myth of the Cicadas has often been taken to be a warning against an uncritical reception of the Palinode). “Those who view the palinode as the ‘most important’ part of the dialogue,” Werner concludes, “have much explaining to do.”¹³⁹

26. Granted. But there are a couple considerations which speak in favor of the centrality of the Palinode, provided we understand that centrality aright. As we argued earlier, the elevation of one aspect over others need not come at the cost of the denigration of those others provided there’s a way of incorporating their significance within the more governing significance of that which is elevated. While it is not uncommon for readers of the dialogue to take the Palinode as “Plato’s real teaching” and accordingly *abstract* it from the rest of the dialogue (and, in doing so, deserve some just censure), taking the Palinode as central or focal for our interpretation of the dialogue does not require that we abstract it from the rest of the dialogue and thereby cast the other sections aside as so much useless fluff. If we can, instead, articulate a structure for the dialogue wherein the Palinode is central to the dialogue but also profoundly connected to what comes before and after, such that to omit either the prior or

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* Werner tends toward a deflationary account of the truth of the Palinode; see, e.g., *Myth and Philosophy*, 49-50. By contrast, Schenker offers good contextual reasons, in response to Phaedrus’s character, for Socrates’s apparent hesitance about the truth of the Palinode; see “Strangeness of the *Phaedrus*,” 81-82.

posterior sections would be to fail to see the fullness of what's given in the Palinode, then the triptych reading, which centralizes the Palinode, would not fall prey to this style of critique. The suspicion guiding this investigation is that the *Phaedrus* is structured chiastically, as Hermias supposes,¹⁴⁰ as an ascent to and descent from one's recollective contact with the divine (and thereby with Beauty, to which the divine leads), an event which occurs at the *exact* center of the dialogue (252e-253a).¹⁴¹ The descent, however, is not to be interpreted as a *fall* from the glories of the superheavenly place, but instead as the *positive completion* of one's ascent thereunto,¹⁴² for rather than leaving behind the Palinode's content in the latter section of the *Phaedrus*, as commentators frequently suppose, I claim that Plato leads the reader to see the relevance of radiant Beauty for language. Beautiful language, which, as we'll argue, (cooperatively) makes "visible" the invisible forms, is the primary way by which we bear witness to the superheavenly beings we "saw" in the prenatal journey and remember in this life (see especially Ch. 6). If there is indeed harmony between the discussion of beautiful speech in the latter third of the dialogue and the discussion of Beauty itself in the Palinode, then we have reason to say that an emphasis on the Palinode (whose discussion of Beauty grounds the discussion of beautiful speech) is not, in fact, a violence to the dialogue, as Werner claims. Nor does it require a trivialization of the latter third's themes, for those themes are the working-out of the Palinode's themes, but in a different context (a context for which the dialogue prepares us by emphasizing speeches and speech-making in the prologue).

¹⁴⁰ See Hermias, *Scholia*, 12.31-13.5.

¹⁴¹ As calculated by J. B. Kennedy, "Plato's Forms, Pythagorean Mathematics, and Stichometry," *Apeiron*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2010), 11.

¹⁴² My interpretation of the *Phaedrus* thus parallels some of the key points in Schindler's interpretation of the *Republic* in *Plato's Critique*.

27. Likewise, we can see the dialogue's later discussion of both collection and division and writing as the dialogue's way of thematizing what had already been brought up under the shift in metaphysical vision that the Palinode mediates. Neither collection and division nor writing are new to the *Phaedrus* at the point at which they are explicitly discussed (though they may indeed be new to Plato's compositional chronology, as Werner supposes, but on Werner's own grounds this fact may not be so significant),¹⁴³ for the entire conversation is motivated by Lysias's *written* speech,¹⁴⁴ and we see Socrates practicing division in the beginning of the Palinode, wherein he distinguishes first human madness from divine madness and then proceeds to distinguish four types of divine madness. Further, the dialogue's two uses of "reminder" (*hupomnema*; 249c, 276d) serve to link the function of writing and the role of the lover's experience of the beloved's beauty, as we shall go on to discuss (see ch. 6). Finally, we have to consider the dialogue's apparent qualifications of the veracity of the *Phaedrus* myth at 246a and 265b-c. We will return to both of these passages later, but let it suffice here to say that neither point is unambiguous.

28. If these responses ring true (especially in light of further substantiation to be given), then we have some reason to take the dialogue as a triptych wherein the Palinode plays a central, governing role. Accordingly, we can say that the metaphysical vision it mythically discloses is central to the dialogue (and thus to our interpretation thereof), and we will go on

¹⁴³ See Werner, "Problem of Unity," 104. But given that both topics show up in the *Phaedrus* before they are explicitly discussed (as we are about to note), it seems strange for Werner in particular to make his point based on the supposed fact that neither theme had ever shown up in Plato before the *Phaedrus*, for Werner also says (rightly) that "any appeals to external considerations—the chronology of the dialogues, Plato's intellectual development, Greekness or Greek culture, or carelessness of the author—ought to be made only as a last resort of interpretation, in those cases where no sense can otherwise be made of a text" (128-129).

¹⁴⁴ On the many ways in which writing shows up in the dialogue before the critique of writing thematizes it, see especially Burger, *Defense of Writing*, as well as Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, ch. 5.

to interpret the dialogue accordingly, for our guiding suspicion here is that the dialogues reveal what they have to offer when we take their metaphysical visions *seriously* and when we go on to draw out the implications thereof.¹⁴⁵ The first third of the dialogue is, on this read, an ascent from Lysias’s sophistic understandings of love, language, and human nature to an understanding of these subjects grounded in a metaphysics of Beauty. The second third is the culmination of right-love, right-language, and right-soul-leading as oriented toward Beauty itself. The final third is a *positive* descent from Beauty—which completes the ascent—into the way in which we can live in the light of Beauty in our everyday activities, most prominent among which is our use of language. In the first third, we have yet to come to a measure by which we can determine good love and language from bad; in the second third, we see that Beauty itself is that measure; in the final third, we see a discussion of the merits of linguistic activity in light of that measure. In brief, we might see in the *Phaedrus* the movement of ascent from and the descent back into the cave, with the brightness of Beauty shining on us along the journey.¹⁴⁶ As we will argue, the ascent to Beauty transforms our relationship to love and language, and this transformation affects our new way of engaging with both phenomena in the descent.

¹⁴⁵ The approach given here is concordant with that of White in *Rhetoric and Reality*, 2: “The approach taken in this study is based on the premise that the *Phaedrus* can be read as an account of reality, and how human nature must confront that reality in order to speak, and to live, as wisely and well as possible.” I would only add that we must confront reality in order also to *love* as wisely and well as possible (as we’ll discuss in Ch. 4). Likewise, I recognize alongside White (cf. 8) that the metaphysical principles are largely “inchoate” in the *Phaedrus* and that multiple consistent and mutually-informing readings are possible.

¹⁴⁶ To complicate the matter, we might see the dramatic sections at either end of the dialogue as initiating opposed motions: the prologue depicts the “leading down” (*katagōgē*) of Socrates and Phaedrus from Athens to the grove, wherein Phaedrus delivers Lysias’s speech, the nadir of the dialogue’s first third, given the sophistic views of language and love entailed therein; following Lysias’s speech, we see an ascent toward Beauty itself; from Beauty itself, we see a descent from language as spoken to language as written, culminating in the discussion of the critique of writing and the trivialization of language it suggests; finally, after we learn of the norms governing good speaking and writing, we see Socrates and Phaedrus return back *up* to Athens to communicate what they have learned.

§5. An ‘Agogic’ Itinerary

1. What remains, then, is to give a brief overview of the argument to come. As we said before, the interpretation we will develop takes as its guiding principles the centrality of soul-leading (as developed over the course of the dialogue by means of its frequent use of the language of leading and following) and the centrality of the metaphysical vision disclosed by the Palinode’s myth (whence the title of our work). We will try to show how attention to both of these features illuminates both the individual parts of the dialogue as well as the whole. Our purpose here is, to quote Romano Guardini in his book on the trial and death dialogues, “philosophical interpretation,” that is, “seeking to enter into Plato’s thought; not in order to state and retrace his ideas historically, but in order to approach, under their guidance, nearer to the truth itself. Such a method must aim primarily at bringing the text itself into the greatest possible prominence.”¹⁴⁷ We take as a further guiding assumption that Plato himself is a soul-leader *par excellence*, and that by carefully, inquisitively, and trustingly reading him, we can come to see what he seems to have seen and, by doing so, come to take up Plato’s own act of co-illuminating what is to be seen for others. That is the (perhaps overly ambitious) goal of this project, and the reader will have to judge the success of this work in light of that goal.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Romano Guardini, *The Death of Socrates: An Interpretation of the Platonic Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo*, trans. Basil Wrighton (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), xi. Likewise, see Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 21.

¹⁴⁸ I do not intend to comment extensively on every section of the dialogue but instead will focus my commentary on my account of the dialogue’s main argument, as I see it. Accordingly, there will be some hotspots, to which commentators tend to gravitate, of which I will largely steer clear (e.g., the problem of whether *pasa psuchē* should be understood as “all soul” or “every soul” at 245c). Such topics deserve discussion, but the purpose here is to develop a philosophical argument on the basis of the *Phaedrus* rather than an exhaustive textual commentary thereof, and so I will only consider the canonical topics to the extent that they are relevant for the argument being developed. To some extent, not being mired in discussion of the canonical topics may permit a fresher take, which will redirect our attention to previously neglected *topoi*.

2. Chapter 2 will be devoted primarily to the inadequate anthropologies developed by the two anti-erotic speeches and how the Palinode's introduction of reason as a 'hegemonic' principle can alleviate the difficulties into which the two anti-erotic speeches fall. Socrates's anti-erotic speech paints a picture of the human soul as the seat of an eternal civil war, wherein there are different drives vying for leadership. Neither drive can gain hegemony in any permanent way, and even if either drive were to do so, it would not be satisfied, for neither drive is directed to a good which will adequately nourish that drive, let alone the whole soul. Rather, in the absence of reason, both drives lead away from the soul's genuine nourishment and toward the pursuit of what we will call "reality-resistant goods," goods which tend to fail to supply a limit and end of nourishment. Left-hand love, language, and soul-leading are what they are by being directed to such reality-resistant goods; by being so directed, they harm both the agent and the patient of the action. As we'll begin to argue in Ch. 2 (an argument which won't come to completion until much later), this civil war cannot be resolved except by going beyond the inadequate anthropologies of the anti-erotic speeches to the Palinode's inclusion of reason as a possible contender for psychic hegemony. When reason takes the rein, then the whole soul can be nourished. In order for the soul to flourish, it must be harmonized internally and be led by the right leading principle. But since reason leads by itself being led, the soul can't come into flourishing except by being led also by the right external principle.

3. Plato has a bit of a reputation for being basically elitist: the philosophers are essentially a different class from the non-philosophers (the many, *hoi polloi*). Plato seems to endorse such a separation of kinds with the *Republic's* "myth of the metals." If so, it would seem that the fullest degree of flourishing, wherein the soul is harmoniously led internally by reason and led externally to reason's object (truth, "really real reality"), is not available to all

souls. In Chapter 3, we will argue that this is a misperception. The *Phaedrus's* mythic depiction of the soul in the Palinode does seem to make such essentialist distinctions between philosophical and non-philosophical souls, but, as we will argue, none of the distinctions the Palinode draws actually amounts to any kind of essentialist distinction between philosophical souls and non-philosophical souls. All souls are potentially philosophical, for all souls have seen the truth. While nature plays an important role in determining a given soul's experience while incarnate, natural distinctions, such as they are, are not sufficient to prevent any soul from becoming philosophical and thereby entering into the life of flourishing. All souls can be saved; what matters instead is how we try to contribute to that salvation so that all souls will be saved.

4. Chapter 3's argument sets up crucial background for the argument of Chapter 4, which claims that the most immediate way in which souls can be saved is by the reordering of their love toward the right objects. Disordered desire leads to the pursuit of reality-resistant goods, and the pursuit of such goods prevents the soul from achieving the flourishing for which it yearns. Rightly ordered desire, by contrast, leads the soul to the pursuit of what will truly nourish it, the true beings. Rightly ordered love is, we could say, "metaphysically oriented." But, crucially, love does not lead only those who are already rightly ordered. Rather, love itself is part of the redirection of the corrupt soul toward a right orientation to reality. The nascent experience of love heals and redirects the soul such that it can come to experience reality rightly, on reality's own terms. We cease to idolize our beloveds in a way that is unhealthy for both lover and beloved and instead come to recognize the beloved as a radiant image of Beauty itself, the ultimate (though not exclusive) object of love. Love contributes to the soul's internal harmony by allowing reason to regain its rightful 'hegemony' over the

remainder of the soul, so that the whole soul can be nourished. Chapter 5 will discuss how the dialogue's discussion of love-matters in the speech is reflected in the dialogue's drama. Further, Chapter 5 will discuss the relevance of the dramatic scene, preparing the way for some of the claims to come in Chapter 6.

5. If, as Chapter 4 claims, love can redirect and heal the soul and thereby make it adequate to be led by love to the true beings, it can only do so because love is never just love. Rather, the experience of love (interpersonal love) is always already situated within a divine and ontological context. Love neither begins nor ends with the lovers' relationship, but instead begins and ends with Being itself. Reality is, as we'll argue in Chapter 6, *structured by care*. It is not an indifferent, dead realm beyond our perception, but instead a transcendent, living, and active principle which is characterized by "radiance." Just as the philosopher "goes down" into the cave on account of her love of the Good, so reality itself "goes down" to us in an act of care. The gods care for all and they lead all back to that around which they structure their lives. Reality, then, can be characterized as generously caring in its self-presentation through images (descent) and as ultimately desirable in its magnetic call through images (ascent). We see, then, in the *Phaedrus* the origins of the later Neoplatonic principles of *exitus* and *reditus*, the procession from the One and the return thereunto that characterizes all of what is. When we see reality as not just desirable (the more immediately obvious pole of reality's characterization) but also generously caring, we can start to see that our relationship to reality must conform to both poles. Not only do we desire to be unified with the real; we are also the recipients of divine care and are called to cooperate in that act of care. Language, we will see, is our primary way of cooperating in divine care (by nature, if not, as in most cases, by habitual use). When we are reformed by love (Ch. 4), we become adequate to communion with the reality which

has descended to us to help lift us up to itself; when we do so, we come to recognize that we ourselves are agents of the divine mission.

6. Language, then, is no longer merely a tool for acquisition, nor an instrument for power, nor ordered basically to persuasion. Rather, language is seen to be ordered to reality by its very nature. Language is the way by which we cooperate in reality's self-disclosure, whereby we contribute to reality's anagogic effect. We extend reality's care by leading reality into light for others so that they may too participate in the gods' cosmic dance. While this orientation and goal is intrinsic to all rightly-ordered language, reflection on the status of writing, a use of language particularly problematized by the dialogue, allows us to see that language itself can do what it does because it essentially *is* an iconic image of reality, as we'll argue in Chapter 6. Language transports us to that which it bespeaks (that which it images) even as it adds its own determination to that which it bespeaks. In doing so, language is both suitable for co-manifesting reality and for co-manifesting it for *this* particular person who has a particular character and will be responsive to particular presentations of what is to be presented. In writing, we see the image character most clearly, for unlike living, spoken language, which always has some direct connection its source, written language has no direct connection to its source and can thereby present itself as severed from its source. Written language presents us with a crisis: is this an idol, which refuses to point beyond itself to that of which it is the image, or is it an icon, which refuses to allow itself to arrest the viewer's gaze? Given that reality presents itself to us in images, our reflections on writing help us to see that this is the question at stake in all of our encounters with the world. Everything in this world is a potential reminder of the true beings, but unless we "correctly handle" such reminders, we will be in

danger of falling prey to the reality resistant idolatrous view of the world, endemic to Lysianic seduction.

Chapter 2: The Civil War in the Soul: Reality-Resistance and a Crisis of Management

“And corrupt people look for others to spend their days with, running away from themselves, for when they are by themselves they have many uncomfortable recollections, and anticipate other things of the same kind, but when they are with others they forget. And since they have nothing loveable about them, they feel no friendliness toward themselves. Such people do not even feel joy or pleasure along with themselves, since the soul within them is in a state of civil war, and one part, on account of vice, is pained at refraining from certain things when another part is pleased; one part drags them here and the other part there, as if tearing them apart.”

—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX.4.1166b13-22¹

§1. Introduction: Desire and the Ends of Soul-Leading

1. In Chapter 1, I argued that “soul-leading” (*psuchagogia*) unifies the *Phaedrus*, both thematically and non-thematically. Soul-leading serves as a thematic unifier both on account of its ubiquity within the dialogue (for, in addition to being used to define the intrinsic power of words and to characterize the art of rhetoric, it is dramatically enacted throughout the dialogue and mythically depicted in the Palinode) and on account of its capacity to unify and “incorporate” the dialogue’s other major themes (i.e., love, rhetoric, philosophy, self-knowledge, etc.). Further, I suggested that the dialogue seeks to highlight and unify these themes non-thematically by means of its frequent utilization of the semantic network of “leading” and “following.” This chapter will begin to substantiate these claims by 1. focusing on how the three speeches on love articulate competing understandings of the end and character of soul-leading (with particular reference to the dialogue’s two main types of soul-leading, language and love), and 2. considering the significance of how the three speeches on love utilize the semantic network of “leading” and “following.” The arguments of this chapter will be complemented by arguments developed later on, especially in Chapters 4 and 6.

2. Likewise, as I preliminarily argued in Chapter 1, soul-leading is the *outer* disposition of philosophy, the act by which philosophy communicates its *inner* disposition (its loving

¹ Citations of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* will come from Joe Sachs’s translation (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002).

fidelity to what's ultimate); philosophy communicates this inner disposition primarily through love and through language. In order to begin to clarify what this claim means and why it is a suitable formulation for the core philosophical content of the *Phaedrus*, we need to introduce some new language by which we can get a better handle on what Plato seems to be doing with the notion of “soul-leading,” particularly in the three speeches on love that take up the majority of the first two-thirds of the dialogue. Once we do so (paying special attention to the language of “communion” and “reality-resistance” to be discussed below), we will have developed a framework within which we can start to evaluate the crucial ambiguity of soul-leading built into the Greek term Plato deploys. To what extent can philosophical soul-leading lead followers, in love and in language, to what's ultimate? To what extent can anti-philosophical soul-leaders—or, more broadly, to what extent can those who are simply indifferent to philosophy—lead their followers by means of love and language *away* from what's ultimate? What are the consequences of doing so?

3. The distinction between philosophical and anti- or non-philosophical soul-leading hinges on the nature of human desire. As Socrates says at the beginning of his first speech, “It is clear to all (*hapanti delon*) that love (*erōs*) is a form of desire (*epithumia tis*), and we know that even those who are not in love desire beautiful things (*tōn kalōn*)” (237d; translation modified). Later, Socrates distinguishes words into two groups: those concerning the signification of which we all agree, like “iron” and “silver,” and those about which we tend to disagree, like “just” and “good” (263a). Socrates and Phaedrus agree that “love” belongs to “the disputed class of words” (263c). The fact that we tend to have difficulties coming to any sort of agreement about what love *is* and what love *loves* reflects a basic human predicament: each of us is subject to a multitude of desires which frequently direct us in contradictory ways, and it is difficult to navigate through these divergently-oriented desires in order to come to some

kind of fulfillment. Each of our desires pulls us toward their respective objects with the (implicit) promise that those objects are either *the* good itself or at least something which will lead us to the good. It is, however, far from clear that the various desires we experience have equally valid claims to lead us toward the fulfillment for which we yearn. Some desires, at least, quickly reveal themselves to be not only unfulfilling but dangerous, misery-inducing, and even life-threatening.

4. To paraphrase a point aptly made in David Foster Wallace's commencement address, "This Is Water," we don't get a choice about the fact that we desire. We don't get a choice, that is, about the fact that we desire what we desire so strongly as to orient our lives around the things we desire, to "worship" them even. We only get to choose which goods we pursue, around which we orient our lives. We only get to choose *what* we worship, not whether we worship.² The soul's "erotic" disposition—the fact that the soul is fundamentally characterized by a kind of yearning for some good to be for it a kind of gravitational center around which it orbits—is undislodgable. One of our primary life-tasks, then, is to analyze and evaluate our disparate desires and their respective objects so that we can come to determine which, if any, will lead us toward fulfillment—if, that is, any kind of meaningful fulfillment is indeed possible. If we choose poorly, we might find that the goods toward which our desires lead will, in Wallace's words, "eat you alive."³ Further, to fail to analyze, evaluate, and choose among our desires is to allow the most *insistent* desire to be most directive. A desire's degree of insistence, however, need not correspond to its capacity to fulfill; it may, in fact, turn out that in some cases our most insistent desires pull us *away* from fulfillment and eat us alive. If

² David Foster Wallace, *This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, About Living a Compassionate Life* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009), 96ff.

³ *Ibid.*, 102.

we are to have any chance at the happiness for the sake of which we do all that we do, we have to come to know both ourselves (particularly, the nature and order of our desires) and the greater world within which we are situated (especially insofar as particular aspects or elements of the world are the very things toward which our desires so stridently pull us).

5. In this chapter, I will argue that the *Phaedrus*'s three speeches on love present us with some pertinent tools by which we can analyze the nature, value, and tendencies of our various desires. The three speeches do so by presenting contrasting evaluations of love. Lysias's speech and Socrates's first speech jointly argue that love is basically a sick form of desire which harms both lover and beloved, whereas Socrates's retraction speech, the *Palinode*, argues that though love is properly characterized as a kind of "mad" desire, "the greatest of all good things come to us through madness, provided that madness is divinely given" (244a). In the process of making his arguments and counter-arguments about the value of love, Socrates develops the bases for a pair of philosophical anthropologies (accounts of the nature and fundamental experiences of human beings as such) which ground alternate understandings of the nature of human desire and the human experience of love.⁴ Socrates does so by articulating what principles lead the soul to act as it does, both internally (i.e., what aspect of the soul is directive for the whole organism?) and externally (i.e., toward what object of desire is the soul pulled?). As we will see, Lysias argues that love is a sickness to be avoided on account of his implicit understanding of human nature and the nature of our desires. In Socrates's first speech—delivered in order to satisfy Phaedrus's desire that Socrates "outdo" Lysias at his own game—

⁴ Socrates begins his retractionspeech by saying "'On the nature of the soul [*psuchēs phuseōs*],' both in its human and divine forms, it is necessary first of all to consider the truth about what the soul experiences and what her activities are [*pathē te kai erga talēthes*]. The demonstration begins as follows" (245c). While much of the anthropology of the speeches is implicit, Socrates does address the passions and actions of the soul in both speeches with special emphasis on *erōs*.

Socrates explicates Lysias's implicit anthropology and gives arguments on the basis of that anthropology about why desire, as a whole, is dangerous.⁵ In this anthropology, the human soul is characterized by a state of perpetual civil war. Within it, two leading principles—the desire for pleasure and acquired opinion in pursuit of what's best—battle each other for supremacy. When desire for pleasure leads, the soul is sick, whereas when acquired opinion regains control, the soul returns to sound-mindedness. In the *Palinode*, delivered by Socrates in order to reconcile himself with the god, Love, whom he had slandered in his former speech, Socrates revises the first speech's anthropology by introducing the role of reason (suppressed by the prior two speeches) as a third possible leading principle. He then shows how desire can't be properly understood or evaluated without reference to its relationship to reason.⁶

6. The contrasting anti-erotic and pro-erotic anthropologies Socrates develops have significant implications for soul-leading, especially concerning the nature and ends of love and language. Accordingly, by attending to the anthropologies developed in the speeches, we can come to greater clarity concerning what differentiates philosophical soul-leading from its deficient and harmful lookalikes. In brief, I will argue that when the soul is directed toward goods which cannot fulfill our desire, and when soul-leading itself is directed toward such goods, the means by which soul-leading leads the soul, love and language, become perverted such that they no longer perform their proper works. Rather than draw us toward that which

⁵ It is striking that Socrates not only desires to outcompete the sophisticated rhetorician at his own game but succeeds with aplomb. Why is Socrates so good at speaking falsely (as he'll later claim) about the nature of love, and why would Socrates bother to gratify Phaedrus in doing so, given that Socrates correctly assesses Phaedrus's desire for speeches as sickly? We'll consider these questions with respect to the drama and scenery of the dialogue in Ch. 5.

⁶ In what follows, I refer to reason, desire for pleasure, and socially-conscious acquired opinion as the three possible leading principles of our soul; of the three leading principles, desire for pleasure and acquired opinion function specifically as motive forces (in the *Palinode*'s mythical image, the horses are responsible for the soul's motion, and the charioteer, which can't by itself move the soul, is responsible for direction the horses' motion and restraining the horses from acting in ways that are not conducive to the good of the whole soul).

will fulfill us, they draw us toward what will “eat us alive.” By contrast, when love and language are rightly ordered to their proper ends, the whole soul can be led to that in which it can find true fulfillment.

7. In what follows, I argue that the Palinode’s introduction of a reasoning capacity in the soul serves two purposes in the dialogue. First, the reasoning capacity, symbolized in the Palinode by the charioteer, is able to harmonize the internal strife of the soul’s discordant motive forces (desire for pleasure, acquired opinion), as depicted in all three speeches on love given in the *Phaedrus*. In other words, the soul’s civil war can be resolved when reason is directive and the two motive forces become obedient to reason.⁷ Second, after harmonizing the whole soul, the reasoning capacity directs the whole soul toward “communion” with its proper object, the “true beings” (*ta ontōs onta*) in the “superheavenly place,” in such a way that the whole soul is fulfilled thereby. By “communion,” I mean a relation in which the relata 1. are genuinely together, but also 2. retain their abiding difference and mutual transcendence with respect to each other.⁸ In other words, the relata genuinely meet, in some sense, on equal terms without either side consuming or subsuming the other. This chapter is devoted primarily

⁷ As we’ll see over the course of this chapter, being “obedient” to reason is not being “enslaved” to reason, nor is it being “suppressed” by reason. I am not advocating the “standard” account of Platonic dualism (as described, e.g., by Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 136-137) in which Plato putatively thinks that what it is to be a philosopher is to be a disembodied being of pure reason. While I am arguing that reason ought to be that which directs the soul (because otherwise the soul can neither be harmonized nor come to its fulfillment), I also claim that the Palinode’s anthropological vision is one in which reason cannot accomplish its work without the aid of both the soul’s subrational motive forces (as discussed in this chapter); nor can it do so without the aid of the gods and even reality itself (as I’ll discuss in Chs. 4 and 6).

⁸ A number of Greek words could be translated by “communion”—e.g., *koinōnia* (fellowship; from *koinos*, common), *sunaxis* and *sunagōgē* (*sun* + *agein*, to be led together), *sunousia* (*sun* + *einai*, to be together, “congress”), etc.—though each of them has its own distinct flavor. Accordingly, I use “communion” (*cum* + *unus*, being one together, according to Augustine’s etymology) to cover the general semantic network, prescinding from those distinct flavors. The Eleatic Stranger offers a working definition of “communion” (*koinōnein*) at *Sophist* 248b: “A being affected or a doing arising from some power and whose source is the coming together of things, one against the other.” Citations from the *Sophist* are from the translation of Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 1996).

to an account of how the soul can *fail* to come into such a communion with the ultimate object of its longing when reason does not harmonize the soul. As we've already suggested, the soul fails to come into communion with reality when it is improperly ordered internally (when one or the other motive forces usurps reason's leading position) and when it is improperly ordered externally (when it is directed toward goods which cannot, in principle, satisfy it). Later chapters will address what makes possible a successful communion. What follows in the rest of this section is a brief itinerary of the rest of Chapter 2.

8. §2 discusses the way in which both the dialogue's drama and the three speeches on love portray the soul's civil war for leadership. Dramatically, the dialogue emphasizes Phaedrus's own ambiguity at key moments, suggesting that when we read the love-speeches' discussion of the soul's internal turmoil, we should keep Phaedrus himself in mind (a point to which we will return at greater length in Chapter 5). While all three love-speeches highlight the ambiguity of the soul's internal turmoil, they do so in significantly different ways. Lysias's speech, as we'll see, has a somewhat paradoxical relationship to this internal turmoil, for it is given by a speaker who seems to deride desire even as he absolutizes desire in himself. Socrates's anti-erotic speech, by contrast, clarifies the internal turmoil of the soul implicit in Lysias's world-view and suggests that, on these terms at least, the civil war is irresolvable. By doing so, Socrates prepares the way for the Palinode's correction of the anti-erotic speeches' anthropology.

9. §3.1 clarifies the way in which the Palinode's anthropology modifies and corrects that of the anti-erotic speeches by introducing reason as a third possible leading principle in the soul. By contrast to the anti-erotic speeches, the Palinode presents an anthropology in which the soul can become internally harmonized; this is possible because, as the Palinode

indicates, the soul's two motive forces are *naturally* subordinate to reason. "Naturally" and "by nature" are, of course, ambiguous. It will become clear in what follows that by "naturally" here I do not mean that the soul is always in such a condition (the Palinode itself clearly confutes such an impression); instead, I mean that the harmony of the soul, which requires that the soul's two motive forces are subordinate to reason, is a normative requirement of the soul's flourishing built into the soul's nature. A soul can't flourish except insofar as it becomes harmonized internally in the right way. Additionally, the Palinode suggests that all human souls have been at some point internally harmonized in the right way, but most have, in one way or another, fallen out of that condition and thus need to be brought back into it (as we'll discuss in this chapter and the next). The internal harmony that the gods exhibit is a model for the ideal condition under which the human soul can flourish, and when we look into the souls of the gods, what we see are charioteers directing their horses, who are wholly good, harmoniously. While it is possible (and not uncommon) that one or the other motive forces takes the lead, thereby throwing the soul into a civil war similar to that depicted in the anti-erotic speeches, this condition of civil war is not *intrinsic* to the soul in the Palinode as it is in the anti-erotic speeches. Instead, it is a correctable privation of the soul's natural order. Given that the Palinode recasts the soul's two motive forces as subordinate by nature to reason, we should expect to see some notable changes in their characterization.

10. §3.2 and §3.3 describe what will happen to a soul in whom one or the other motive forces gains hegemony. Regardless of whether it is desire for pleasure or our socially-conscious acquired opinion that becomes hegemonic, the soul will not only fail to be nourished as a whole (a fact which should not surprise us since there is no reason why either of these motive forces would seek out either the other motive force's nourishment or reason's nourishment in addition to its own), but, more importantly, even that hegemonic principle will fail to nourish

itself. In other words, there's a curious irony at work here: the absolutization of desire for pleasure in the soul leads to the soul's failure to satisfy its desire for pleasure, and an absolutization of socially-conscious acquired opinion in the soul leads to its failure to come into any kind of meaningful social relationship. By seeing how these two motive forces postulate their own criterion of nourishment only to fail to achieve it when they have total power in the soul, we come to see that their nourishment can only be secured if something else is directive. The negative arguments of §3.2 and §3.3 thus set up the positive arguments to come concerning reason's capacity to lead the whole soul into nourishment. When reason takes the lead, not only is reason fulfilled, but so also are socially-conscious acquired opinion and desire for pleasure.

11. If §3.2 and §3.3 consider the soul's failure to be nourished when either of the motive forces is hegemonic, based on the characteristics and internal logic of those forces when ungoverned by reason, §4 analyses the same issue from the perspective of the natures of the goods the disordered soul seeks. The soul desires many different types of goods, and not all goods have the same characteristics. Of special interest here is a class of goods which we will call "reality-resistant goods." Some goods tend to house within themselves an internal reference to reality, such as an internal measure of satiation.⁹ For example, when I am thirsty, I desire water, but when I drink a proper amount of water, my body (loosely speaking) "tells" me that it is sated and my thirst is slaked. Failing to meet this limit will ensure that I remain thirsty or, in more extreme cases, parched and dehydrated. Going beyond this measure, however, does not "add" anything to the experience but instead quickly starts to cause

⁹ There are other goods which in one sense provide an internal measure of satiation but in another sense do not restrict us from pursuing them ever more deeply. These goods will increasingly become the object of our concern over the next few chapters.

suffering, for one begins to feel overfull, and, in extreme cases, one can suffer from water intoxication. In a similar way the operations of various arts and skills (what the Greeks call *technè*) produce the good products and good conditions they produce by attending to the prescriptions built into the realities upon which they work. If one wants to build a sturdy house, one has to pay attention not just to the art of carpentry by which one builds, but also to the natures of the materials one will use (the wood, the stone), the nature of the landscape (is the ground level? Firm?), and climate (what sort of weather will this house have to weather?). By contrast, other goods tend to abscond from any such internal reference to reality; indeed, they tend to abscond from any measure of satiation at all and invite us to pursue them continually, *ad infinitum*. These goods—such as money and power; honor, fame, prestige, and good reputation; and pleasure—are what we could call “reality-resistant goods.” Such goods not only resist any measure reality might ordinarily impose upon them but also distort our perception of reality by convincing us that we should value the means rather than the end (in the case of money and power), the sign over the signified (in the case of honor, fame, and reputation), and the external byproduct of an act rather than the act itself (in the case of pleasure).

12. Money and power, for example, are, by nature, instrumental goods, and they derive their goodness from the fact that they can be utilized to acquire either goods whose value is not reducible to instrumentality (for example, health) or goods which are basically instrumental, but which have a direct connection to a good which is in turn irreducible to instrumentality (such as the surgery which promotes health). Unlike those goods which are tethered to particular realities—which, indeed, would lose their goodness when severed from those particular realities—the utility of money and power is abstract and general. Since this utility is abstract and general, applicable to many things and interchangeable with many other

things, this kind of good seems to promise us a kind of universal beneficence. Because we become convinced that money and power are the way by which we can get *everything*, we seek to stockpile as much as possible with the hope of being ready for all that is to come. This can quickly turn into the pursuit of more money and power as if for its own sake (there may, perhaps, remain a recognition that money and power are *for* various other goods that we actually want for their own sake, but the more we are swayed by the apparent universal beneficence of money and power, the more this recognition becomes tenuous). Hence, we start to try to obtain as much of them as possible, *ad infinitum*, and they never tell us “enough; you are sated.” Because we become obsessed with the absolutized means, we lose sight of the value of the ends for the sake of which we sought the means in the first place. We will discuss such reality-resistant, measure-denying goods in §4.1.

12. In §4.2, we will apply our general treatment of reality-resistant goods developed in §4.1 to the direct concerns of the *Phaedrus*. Though reality-resistant goods can have measures *imposed* on them (as when, for example, we calculate a budget and determine how much money we actually need based on our real, material needs, beyond which any additional money has no direct use), it is also possible for the reverse to happen. That which has a natural, internal connection to reality and reality-imposed norms can be pursued *as if* divorced from its intrinsic connection to a given reality (as, for example, we see in gluttony, a relation toward food in which one denies the measure of satiation built into the act of eating). When activities which would ordinarily be directed toward and measured by a given reality are instead directed toward reality-resistant goods, they can take on those goods’ reality-resistant character. As we’ll see in §4.2, this is precisely what happens to both love and language when one loves or one speaks with a disordered soul (as in the case of the humanly-sick lover and the sophisticated rhetorician). Disordered love is the love proper to a disordered soul, and disordered language is the

language proper to a disordered soul, but, in themselves, they are bastardizations. When, for example, one's soul is wholly directed by the desire for pleasure, so too will be one's engagement with love and with language. The anti-erotic speeches give us detailed accounts of how such a disordered lover's love will appear: as a result of his pleasure-lust, the humanly-sick lover seeks pleasure at all costs, leading to his maltreatment of his beloved. I will argue that the dialogue provides sufficient detail to characterize a similarly disordered language-user, wherein one's desire for pleasure will warp language so that it no longer serves its proper function—the manifestation of reality—but instead becomes a particularly potent member of one's arsenal of means by which one overpowers and extorts money and reputation from one's auditors. Disordered language and disordered love *falsify* and *distort* their objects while also contributing to the disordered speaker's and lover's misery (since, by means of these disordered forms of soul-leading, the agent pursues what is contrary to her flourishing).

13. After discussing the ways in which orienting love and language (and soul-leading generally) toward reality-resistant goods obscures the internal connections of these acts to reality and thereby makes them potent forces for *misleading* souls, we will move on to consider more broadly how the soul can come into communion with reality. In later chapters, I will articulate how the dialogue “heals” the disordered forms of soul-leading by reconnecting them to reality as well as how rightly ordered love and language can lead us into communion.

§2. Civil War Without End?—Anti-erotic Anthropology

1. Throughout the *Phaedrus*, there is an element of discord in the soul, occasioned by the soul being “sick (*nosounti*) with desire” for that which it loves;¹⁰ this love-induced discord provides

¹⁰ Socrates is sick with desire for speeches and calls himself a “lover of speeches” (228b-c); Lysias takes love as a kind of “affliction,” and says that “lovers certainly agree that they are sick rather than of sound mind” (231d); Phaedrus recognizes that the proposition “the lover is sicker than the nonlover” is the “one

the existential ground of the discussion and of the reflections on love which the dialogue presents. Phaedrus, who seems in this case to represent us all in our mere thrownness, is characterized as being pulled “in two directions at once” (*epamphoterizēi*, 257b) by his desire; in his case, he is pulled on the one hand (by Lysias) to rhetorical prowess and on the other hand (by Socrates) to true love and wisdom-loving speeches. We can thus view Phaedrus as a kind of case study of the soul’s inner turmoil and civil war. He is somewhat directed toward truth and wisdom, but he has not yet adequately turned his whole soul to truth (he has not yet adequately received what he has already been given, as we will go on to explain), for a desire for rhetorical prowess and the goods one can obtain by means of such a prowess pull him away from his inclination toward truth and wisdom. The soul’s existential situation is similarly depicted in two prominent images: first, in the image of Typhon, with reference to which Socrates questions whether he is something more complex and more tumultuous than that hundred-headed beast or instead something simpler and more divine (cf. 230a); second, in the Palinode’s image of the wanton horse fighting with the charioteer and its obedient horse for supremacy (cf. 254a-b).

2. This element of discord has been present from the beginning of the dialogue and remains so throughout. We see psychological discord in the dramatic prologue and subsequent action of the dialogue, in all three of the speeches on love, and perhaps even in the structure of the drama itself, for the question of how the speeches on love relate to the conversation about artful speech and writing remains vexatious. Attending to this discord as it arises dramatically, existentially, and in the love-speeches themselves will help us to understand the

essential proposition” for Lysias’s speech and any other speech that claims that one should gratify the nonlover rather than the lover (236a); Socrates defines love as a species of desire (*epithumia*) at the beginning of his first speech (237d), and then refers to it as a kind of madness both in the Palinode (cf. 256a-b) and in the discussion of artful speech and writing (cf. 265e-266a).

Palinode's presentation of how a soul can come into genuine communion with being and of what prevents the soul from receiving what it has already been given.

§2.1. Dramatic Discord

3. The three fundamental structural moments of the dialogue—the beginning, the middle, and the end—all point to the ambivalence of Phaedrus's soul and the discordant directions of his desires. Socrates's dialogue-opening question situates Phaedrus at a crossroads, wherein he must consider where he has been and where he will be going (227a). Though Phaedrus answers the question in its most straightforward sense, it becomes clear that there is more at stake in the question; this crossroads betokens a crisis wherein Phaedrus must choose to direct his attention to *mere* rhetoric (of the Lysianic variety), which directs itself toward producing persuasion for the sake of goods like wealth, reputation, and power, or to philosophy and the philosophical art of rhetoric articulated and practiced by Socrates. Phaedrus is situated between the calls and promises of two different loves: Lysianic beguilement and Socratic ecstasy.¹¹ When we recall the introductory question after hearing the Palinode, we see that at a deeper level, Phaedrus is being asked to consider his ultimate origins and the final direction of his soul, upon which the direction of his love will have a bearing.¹² In the middle of the dialogue, Socrates concludes his Palinode with a prayer to Eros, petitioning the previously maligned god to turn Lysias to a love of wisdom, “so that his lover here, Phaedrus, may also stop going in two directions as now, but devote his life solely to Love with wisdom-loving speeches” (257b).

¹¹ As we will go on to discuss, this opposition between beguilement and ecstasy reflects the deep ambiguity of *psuchagōgia*, the leading of souls, discussed in Ch. 1.

¹² See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 107-108 on the different registers in which one can hear the dialogue's opening question. We will return to discuss the significance of the opening question in Chs. 4 and 5.

4. The dialogue dramatically indicates that up through the Palinode and well into the discussion of rhetoric, Phaedrus is sick with desire for rhetorical prowess, caring little for truth.¹³ Socrates describes Phaedrus as having come from Lysias after frequently urging Lysias to repeat his speech and requesting to borrow the speech so that he could memorize it. Seeing Socrates, Phaedrus designs to try Lysias's speech out on him, "even by force, if no one wanted to listen," as Socrates surmises (228a-c). Later, after being tantalized with the possibility of a competing speech from Socrates, Phaedrus threatens Socrates with physical force if he will not deliver (236b-d); he follows the threat of physical violence with a threat to swear never to show Socrates another speech, thus denying Socrates that concerning which he is sick with desire (236d-e). Socrates recalls this force (242a) when he is planning to run across the river before the Nymphs can fully possess him and force him to complete his anti-erotic speech. Thus, we see Phaedrus is perfectly willing to use threats and force, as well as bribes (see 235d), in order to practice his rhetorical skill and to hear other rhetorical speeches.¹⁴ As Socrates says, no one has been a more prolific cause of speeches (242a-b), and we are given to wonder if Phaedrus's capacity to elicit so many speeches is due to his forceful demeanor.¹⁵ Phaedrus delights in the possibility of yet another speech when Socrates announces his intention to deliver a Palinode (243b), but seems to have no concern on Socrates's behalf for the danger of being struck blind, which Socrates hopes to avoid by delivering Stesichorus's Palinode. Indeed, Phaedrus is not convinced about the falsity of Lysias's speech in the interlude following Socrates's first speech, but is instead convinced only that he should insist that Lysias

¹³ We will return to the points made in this paragraph in a more general way in §3-4 of this chapter; we will return to them with respect to Phaedrus in particular in Ch. 5.

¹⁴ On this point, see Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 243.

¹⁵ Recall that Phaedrus was the cause of the speeches in praise of love depicted in the *Symposium* (177a-d). Similarly, Phaedrus is noted as an auditor in the retinue of other significant speechmakers in the *Protagoras* (315c).

“write again on the same theme” (243e). Further, Phaedrus evaluates each of the love-speeches only in terms of their rhetorical skill and not on account of their claims to truth. His first remark after finishing delivering Lysias’s speech is about its rhetorical excellence (234c), and he defends Lysias’s skill against Socrates’s criticisms (235b). Phaedrus takes note of Socrates’s “uncustomary fluency” when Socrates interrupts his first speech, ignoring Socrates’s claims to be divinely possessed (238c) but complains that Socrates’s anti-erotic speech ends prematurely (241d). Most importantly, he responds to the Palinode only by remarking on how “beautifully turned” it was, and on how it caused for him an “anxiety” that Socrates may have indeed outperformed Lysias (257c), even though Socrates warned Phaedrus not to be “astonished” (*mē thaumaseis*) by such things, given that the gods are at work in this grove (238d).

5. Indeed, it is unclear to what extent Phaedrus moves past an instrumentalizing care for the truth toward a true love of the truth (cf. 260a, 262a-b), fulfilled in us only to the extent that we are nourished by the true beings in the superheavenly place. It is only at the very end of the dialogue that we see the possibility that Phaedrus’s desire for rhetorical prowess has been chastened or redirected. When Phaedrus joins in Socrates’s final prayer to Pan (279c), it is possible—though by no means obvious¹⁶—that he has been persuaded to join Socrates on the quest for truth and well-ordered love, thereby fulfilling Socrates’s prayer and leaving behind the Lysianic pursuit of power and security (but not Lysias himself, since Socrates directs Phaedrus to return to Lysias and inform him of their divine revelations, 278b). Socrates

¹⁶ The determination of whether or not Phaedrus has been won over depends heavily on how we understand the development—or lack thereof—of his character over the course of the dialogue. When Socrates remarks that they should “pray to become” the kind of people who bid farewell to any discourses that are not about the just, the beautiful, and the good, and that are not written in the soul, Phaedrus responds, saying, “In every way possible, I hope and pray for what you are saying” (278a-b). The (likely spurious) fourth Platonic *Epigram* seems to suggest that the historical Phaedrus, at least, was “lost,” though the fate of the historical Phaedrus need not exclude the possibility that the dialogue may function as a kind of “literary salvation” of a once promising soul. On the question of whether Phaedrus is convinced or in some sense converted by Socrates toward a life of philosophy, see Ch. 5.

and Phaedrus leave the grove together in order to jointly turn to the task of admonishing their beloveds to turn away from artless rhetoric to philosophy (279c).

6. Why is Phaedrus going in two directions? On the dramatic level, it seems to be because he is committed to pursuing a desire for rhetorical prowess, but in his conversation with Socrates, the conviction concerning the fruitfulness of that commitment appears to be shaken.¹⁷ The three speeches, however, seem to point to a more fundamental reason, which has less to do with Phaedrus's specific desire, and more to do with the nature of desire itself—or, at least, with the nature of one particular species of desire—in its relation to other activities of the soul. Over the course of the three speeches, the discord in the soul and desire's (*epithumia*) role therein become gradually more apparent. The clarity with which this discord is presented is related to the speeches' development of a pair of philosophical anthropologies. While much of the anthropological background of Lysias's speech remains implicit, Socrates's first speech presents its Lysianic account of the dangers of love in specifically anthropological terms, situating the Lysianic claims within the context of a civil war between the soul's most fundamental motive principles. The Palinode will later recontextualize the anthropological content of Socrates's anti-erotic speech, as well as the analysis of love developed by means of that speech's anthropology. In doing so, it will provide new insight about human nature on the basis of a more complete anthropology which can retain the important insights garnered

¹⁷ Though, it should be noted, Phaedrus is said to be going in two directions even *before* they start discussing how to speak and write well; the implication would seem to be that Socrates recognizes some inconstancy in Phaedrus with respect to his desire for rhetorical prowess. Perhaps, one might think, Socrates thinks that Phaedrus can be saved by his desire for beauty, and hence highlighted beauty among the true beings not just because of its unique visibility to us, but also because it is most what Phaedrus needs to hear in order to be converted?

from the less adequate anthropology of the anti-erotic speeches while also avoiding their errors.¹⁸

§2.2. The Nonlover's Way of Avoiding Discord in the Soul

7. Lysias, who in Phaedrus's estimation is "the most clever (*deinotatos*) of our writers today" (228a), has written a remarkably "refined" (*kekompseutai*, 227c) speech in which he argues, contrary to Athenian custom and understanding, that "favors should be granted to one who is *not* in love with you rather than to one who is" (227c).¹⁹ Phaedrus spent the morning with Lysias exhorting Lysias to deliver the speech over and over again so that Phaedrus might memorize it. Phaedrus borrows the scroll upon which the speech is written so that he might continue to practice it while taking a constitutional walk outside of the town walls. After running into Socrates on his way out of town, Phaedrus entices Socrates to join him on his journey so that Phaedrus might practice delivering the speech to him. In the speech, Lysias argues for his thesis primarily by suggesting that lovers are sick and unsound of mind (231d); as a consequence, they don't look out for the beloved's well-being (232c-d), are inconsistent and unfaithful (231a, c), and will cause the beloved to suffer from social stigmas (231e-232a). Non-lovers, who, by contrast, are "not weakened by love" and are instead in full self-possession (233d) should be chosen because they will look out for the beloved's well-being

¹⁸ While a number of commentators recognize that the speeches have important anthropological implications (e.g., cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 59, 64, 75), Pieper is preeminent in his recognition of the fact that the speeches on love are essentially works of philosophical anthropology (in addition to being discourses on love and, in the case of the Palinode, a discussion of metaphysics and cosmology); see *Enthusiasm*, 48-51. As we will see in this chapter, my interpretation of the *Phaedrus* largely agrees with Pieper's, though I try to develop a more comprehensive articulation of the points involved.

¹⁹ Ferrari notes that "despite its appearance of iconoclasm the speech is in fact wholly parasitic on the conventional (and, Socrates feels, inadequate) conception of love" (*Listening to the Cicadas*, 49); cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 61-62.

(233a), are consistent and faithful (233c, 234a), and won't cause social scandal (234a-b).²⁰ The Lysianic non-lover argues that whereas the lover offers nothing but enmity and deals upon which he reneges, the non-lover will be a consistent business partner, from whom the beloved will recoup "no harm, only mutual benefit" (234c). Griswold aptly characterizes Lysias's speech as representing "a libertarianism of the spirit entailed by the generalization of free-market economics to the realm of the erotic," for whom the only metric for discerning how to act is "enlightened self-interest."²¹

8. In Lysias's speech, the discord in the soul is almost wholly under the surface, and for good reason. The Lysianic nonlover has achieved a kind of stability and unified directedness, but he has done so by subordinating rationality to *mere* desire.²² While his soul is stably directed, it is stably directed at something intrinsically unstable, though Lysias does not stop to consider this feature of absolutized desire; but this is to anticipate.²³ What desire desires

²⁰ Buccioni argues that "Once we scrutinize the supposed advantages of the nonlover and disadvantages of the lover, it becomes clear that the nonlover's assumed rationality and sobriety are not his real selling point. Rather, his promise of secrecy makes all the difference. The underlying message is: appear in public to be a temperate citizen who abides by social mores and laws, *and* indulge your natural desires in secret" ("Keeping It Secret: Reconsidering Lysias' Speech in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Phoenix*, Vol. 61, No. 1-2 (2007), 16.

²¹ Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 46-47. Griswold notes that the non-lover is unable to justify the exclusivity he demands on the grounds he adopts. "The non-lover's pledges of fidelity are empty" (49). Griswold concludes that "The nonlover who ignores the implications of his own rhetoric is refusing to know himself" (51). We will give further reasons in support of Griswold's analysis below.

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 63; likewise, Alessandra Fussi, "As the Wolf Loves the Lamb," 63-64. Ferrari helpfully distinguishes between harmonizing the soul while retaining the distinctions proper to the parts (as the Palinode seeks to do) and harmonizing the soul by way of dominating the parts (as Lysias does); cf. *Listening to the Cicadas*, 193. A soul ruled by desire is one that suppresses its other parts, whereas one ruled by reason *liberates* its other parts (198).

²³ On the unstable nature of desire, see also *Republic IX* (especially 588c). It is unclear whether the *Republic's* tripartite soul is supposed to map onto the one in the Palinode. See Eva Buccioni, "The Psychological Forces in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2002) for a detailed argument against understanding the Palinode in terms of the *Republic*; cf. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 185-203. Even if the mapping is imperfect (as Buccioni shows), the remarks made there about the ordering of the soul are relevant to our purposes here. More importantly, however, is the fact that the tripartitions in both the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* are *images* of the soul rather than exact descriptions; accordingly, we should expect that no image of the soul perfectly depicts the soul, insofar as it is an image. Given the way in which images fall short of what they image, we should expect a plurality of

(sexual gratification, it would seem; cf. 233c, 234b)²⁴ is taken as given and basic, about which there is no deliberation. Reason is present, but its role has been *reduced* to deliberating about the cleverest and securest *means* of achieving desire's goal.²⁵

9. The nonlover's goal is a "friendship which will last a long time," in which the nonlover engages while being "in full possession" of himself (233c) rather than being sick or mad. Doing so, the nonlover renders himself invulnerable to the hurtful consequences of being "weakened by love." These impersonal—yet supposedly committed and exclusive (cf. 234b)—"friendships" will involve a free exchange of "goods" (cf. 231a), thereby avoiding the lover's trap of "slavishly" (cf. 256e) keeping "a scorecard of labors endured" when it benefits him, only to forget—conveniently—to keep track of such labors fairly when it is time for him to pay up (231b). The "afflicted" lover is a bad business partner because he enters into his "friendship" without a sound mind; when he regains his sound-mindedness, he will no longer

different images which highlight different facets or make certain features easier to see; cf. McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 126ff, 152.

²⁴ Socrates, at least, understands Lysias's nonlover in this way in his anti-erotic speech; cf. 237b.

²⁵ Graeme Nicholson notably reads the situation backwards: "The barren intellectualism of Lysias's address, devoid of *aphrodisiac* and indeed all forms of *erōs*, would signify the deviant situation in which the soul as a whole was overshadowed by, subordinated to, *logos*" (*Plato's Phaedrus: The Philosophy of Love* [West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1999], 197-198). Lysias's problem is not that he's subordinated his desires to reason but that he's subordinated his reason to the desire for pleasure; cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 63. The nonlover's reductive depreciation of reason as a slave to desire is parallel to the demythologizer's reductive rationalization of the various myths discussed in the dialogue's prologue. The nonlover's appeal to security and the demythologizer's desire for a kind of rationalist certainty are both species of a desire to curtail the possibility of being reliant on or influenced by something that exceeds mere human capacity; see Sean Kirkland, "Socrates *contra scientiam, pro fabula*," *Epoché*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2004). It may seem strange to think that reason can be present in madness, for madness would seem to be an absence of reason. As we will see, this need not be true, since one can be rational amidst the divinely-given madness which directs and elevates reason beyond its unaided capacity (hence, divine love is superrational rather than irrational). This way of showing how reason can be present amidst love would not, however, be available to the human madness of love. To see how the humanly mad lover could still be rationally at work, one might look to G. K. Chesterton's explanation of human madness as a sickness *of* reason and not a sickness which removes or obscures reason, for the madman may be characterized by having a hypertrophic rationality insofar as he has a reason *for everything* within a truncated worldview; cf. "The Maniac," in *Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), especially 32-35.

hold onto the beliefs he had when he was a lover (232d), now tempering his former passions with considerations of what decorum and custom require. The lover—he is in discord with himself. Hence, it is the safer option to stick with the constancy of the nonlover, whose sound-mindedness prevents him from renegeing on his deals.²⁶ The nonlover sees the discord in the lover, alternating between sickness and sound-mindedness, and realizes—calculates—that preying on the fear of the inconstancy of this discord is the way to secure his own desire; his goal is no different from that of the lover, but he has discerned a cleverer, more stable way to achieve it.

10. The rhetorically clever nonlover capitalizes on our confusion about what love *is* (cf. 263a, c) in order to *lead our souls away* (cf. 262a-b, esp. the use of *ap-agon*) from an inconstant, decadent love (love as a madness borne out of human illness; cf. 265a) toward what *seems* to be the only other option (the replacement of manic love with sound-mindedness). The nonlover either doesn't recognize or actively suppresses the possibility of a third, nobler option (love as a divinely-given madness, compatible with sound-mindedness; cf. 244a).²⁷ The nonlover sees the possibility of discord and avoids it and its negative effects by making reason a slave to the passions, just as the black horse *tries* to do in the Palinode (cf. 254a-b). It should be noted, in addition, that just as the black horse attempts to enslave both the charioteer *and* the white horse, so does desire subordinate not just reason, but also right opinion in pursuit

²⁶ This, at least, is the way the nonlover secures the beloved's trust. Insofar as the nonlover promises a free exchange of goods without love's manic obsessive and possessive qualities, it would seem that there is nothing that would prevent the nonlover from being able to walk away freely from the exchange at any time. It would seem that by setting up the (non)love relation as akin to a good business deal, the nonlover puts some of the onus of maintaining the relationship on the beloved, who has to continually keep the nonlover interested by keeping the deal profitable. The nonlover's charge that the lover will "slavishly" keep "a scorecard of labors endured" seems to be textually ironic, insofar as that charge seems, as the Palinode will suggest, better directed at the nonlover's "slavish economizing" (256e).

²⁷ Burger notes that rhetoric has the power to make the same thing appear alternately good and evil on account of its suppression of a contextual whole and elevation of a part of that whole to the status of the whole (*Defense of Writing*, 82); this is exactly what Lysias does in his anti-erotic speech.

of the best (cf. 237d).²⁸ Nonlovers pride themselves on being free from the influences of public opinion, and will “choose to do what is best rather than [...] follow (*akoloutountas*) in the footsteps of public opinion” (232a). Yet immediately thereafter, the nonlover reveals that public opinion is no actual worry, for when the public sees the nonlover and beloved together, the mask of non-love will prevent the public from “finding fault with non-lovers for their rendezvous, knowing that such talk is necessary for friendship or some other pleasure” (232b).²⁹ We might ask, to which “other pleasure” does the nonlover allusively refer? The nonlover can claim that he is sound-minded and “not weakened by love” (233c) in his pursuit of such a pleasure, for he has beguiled (*psuchagōgia* in its negative connotation) both the beloved and public opinion by the veneer of non-love; indeed, to a certain extent, we might think he has beguiled himself with his own formidable cleverness (*deinos*, cf. 242d), if we are convinced by the Socratic depiction of the nature of love and what the soul requires for its fulfillment.

§2.3. An Anthropology of Psychic Discord: Two Forces in the Soul

11. After hearing Lysias’s speech, Socrates is prompted—both by Phaedrus’s desire for ever more rhetorical speeches and by the “swelling in his chest” (235c; recalled by Phaedrus at 236c)—to deliver a (rhetorically) better speech on the same theme, in the course of which

²⁸ As Gordon rightly notes, “the dark horse’s wild, uncontrolled nature is instrumental to the soul’s memory of noetic beauty and consequently cannot be seen as unambiguously troublesome. The cause of the charioteer’s being reminded of the true nature of beauty is the dark horse’s strong pull and his intemperate approach to the beloved. The charioteer, left only to his own devices, would not have gotten a glimpse of beauty” (*Plato’s Erotic World*, 103-104). My point here is not that the black horse is all bad, nor that the black horse is incidental to the whole soul’s ultimate communion with both the beautiful beloved and Beauty itself; rather, my point is that if the black horse had its way without the charioteer’s restraint, it would subordinate the whole soul to its inadequate desire, resulting in a failure to achieve not just genuine communion but also its own desire, as I’ll clarify in §3.2.

²⁹ The “acquired opinion in pursuit of the best” of Socrates’s anti-erotic speech reduces to Lysianic public opinion on account of the fact that even in Socrates’s anti-erotic speech reason has yet to be recognized as a third capacity of the soul in some way distinct from the soul’s two leading forces (as we’ll soon discuss). In the absence of a distinct reasoning capacity, acquired opinion can only claim to be right through something other than reason, and so collapses into public opinion. If not from reason, where else but from public opinion will the soul have acquired its opinions about what’s best?

Socrates makes explicit much that lies implicit in the Lysianic account. He calls upon the Muses to lead (*ageite*) him through his delivery of the speech in order to get through it “as quickly as possible” without losing his way “in shame” (237a). In the very act of *unmasking* Lysias as the wily lover disguising himself as a nonlover (237b),³⁰ Socrates “cover[s his] head up completely” (237a) so as to distance himself from the anti-erotic account he is about to give (a gesture we’ll consider at greater length in Ch. 5). Socrates, we might think, puts on a Lysianic mask in order to unmask Lysias, with the hope that Phaedrus sees the *content* of Lysias’s speech for what it is (something, it would seem, Phaedrus *fails* to do, at least at first).³¹ Nevertheless, despite the fact that Socrates distances himself from the speech’s orientation and goal, there is continuity and development from Lysias’s speech to Socrates’s anti-erotic speech,³² and subsequently from this anti-erotic speech to the Palinode’s celebration of love as a divinely-given madness.³³

³⁰ The final point in Lysias’s speech seems to justify Socrates’s accusation that Lysias is a wily lover disguising himself as a nonlover. On the question of whether or not the nonlover would demand exclusivity from the beloved, the nonlover adopts the lover’s norms as his own (234b-c), even though he had previously said that nonlovers “would never be jealous of the [beloved’s] friendship with others” (232d).

³¹ See Paul Friedländer’s comment to this effect, cited in Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 34; see likewise Hermias, *Scholia*, 10.29-11.11. Fussi, by contrast suggests that Socrates actually levies a much more damning attack on the humanly-mad lover (see “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 62). If we return to this dramatic moment in the text after considering the discussion of artful rhetoric which follows the Palinode, we might see Socrates’s choice to speak in the way in which he does as motivated by the psychagogue’s concern to modify his speech for the particular soul of his auditor. Socrates is playing into Phaedrus’s desires and expectations in order to transform them from within.

³² See, e.g., Matthew Linck, “Unmastering Speech: Irony in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2003), 265. As Socrates notes at 235e, “even the worst prose writer has some merit;” we will explore the metaphysical background and implications of Socrates’s point in Ch. 6.

³³ Socrates distances himself from both speeches he delivers, but not in the same way. The former, anti-erotic speech is attributed to Phaedrus (244a) and Phaedrus’s drugging (*kata pharmakeuthentos*, 242e), to the Muses (235c-d, 237a), to Socrates’s suffering a divine passion (*theion pathos peponthenai*, 238c), to Socrates’s being filled by “foreign streams” (235c-d), possibly from the tradition of love poets (Anacreon and Sappho are mentioned at 235c), and to Socrates’s being nearly possessed by the Nymphs of the grove (*numpholēptos*, 238d, 241e) and is compared to the course speech of an ignorant sailor (243c), whereas the latter, pro-erotic speech is attributed to Stesichorus (244a) and is directed to Love himself (257a), being given as a purifying retraction which expresses what is genuine and true about Love (243a-b, 244a). Though Socrates distances himself from both speeches, he never disavows the positive claims he makes in the first speech about humanly-sick love but only the speech’s implicit claim that that is the whole truth about love (cf. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 112; McCoy, *Plato on Rhetoric*, 176). Nor does he disavow the Palinode’s claims, though he does suggest that in the Palinode he has only offered an *image* of the

As we will go on to see, there are claims in Lysias's speech, unearthed in Socrates's anti-erotic speech, that ought to be retained, though they must be transformed by being brought back into a more capacious world-view.

12. Socrates recognizes and foregrounds two fundamental, implicit features of Lysias's speech: 1. Lysias's reliance on the ambiguity of his audience's general conceptions about love (ambiguities which are by no means foreign to us) and 2. Lysias's recognition of the lover's soul as vacillating between the sickness that is love and sound-mindedness and of the effect this vacillation has on the beloved. Attending to both of these features will help us better understand the subsequent speeches as well as the philosophical anthropology being developed in and through them.

13. Socrates begins his anti-erotic speech by pointing to the need for a stable notion, shared (at least for the sake of argument) by speaker and auditor, of that which is under consideration, "*if someone means to deliberate successfully*" (237b; emphasis added). Socrates recognizes that Lysianic rationality restricts itself to deliberating the safest means to a pregiven end; it does not evaluate the desirability of that end. Lysianic rhetoric must presuppose that the end is already taken for granted or, if the end cannot be taken for granted, it must make a persuasive and plausible case for accepting that end. This feature of Lysianic rhetoric is clearly expressed by the first few lines of his speech, in which the nonlover tells his auditor that the

truth rather than an exhaustive discursive account of the truth (cf. 246a, 265b-c), as we'll discuss in Ch. 6. Socrates seems to be committed to the main content of both speeches (as John Cornell suggests; see "Reinventing Love: An Introduction to Plato's *Phaedrus*, *The St. John's Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2 [2015], 26) even though there are significant (though different) ways in which both speeches do not give exhaustive accounts of the matter at hand. The anti-erotic speech is inadequate because it doesn't present an account of the whole of love and thus requires the Palinode to complete its account (cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 67, 70), whereas the Palinode is inadequate because it can only give an image of the whole. But crucially, we must recognize that *inadequacy* need not imply *inaccuracy* or *falsity*.

auditor *already* knows the speaker's desire (see 230e-231a). That end must be firmly fixed in the auditor's mind if the rhetorical demonstrations are to be convincing.

14. Lysias can only secure his end by presupposing a certain commonplace understanding of love as a kind of sickness which prevents the lover from thinking clearly, from being of sound mind (231d). The veiled Socrates accordingly begins his speech by bringing that supposed feature of love thematically to the surface, claiming that “the true essence (*ousian*)” of an argument requires reaching “agreement at the beginning of an investigation” with the audience, without which the investigator, and thereby the audience, will have to resort to the “plausible” (*eikos*), “when they have agreed neither with themselves or with others” (237c).³⁴ *On Lysianic grounds*—that is, on account of the desire to fend off the kind of instability and threat to “autarky” (self-sufficiency) that comes from love or from reliance, in general, on that which exceeds one's grasp—we have to establish the nature of what we are talking about, or at least, something plausible enough to pass as the nature of what we are talking about, so that we can rhetorically lead our auditors to the desired conclusions (cf. 263a, c).³⁵ But if the speech is motivated, at least partially, by the desire to fend

³⁴ Lysias, in sophistic-oratorical fashion, concerns himself with plausibility (*eikos*) rather than necessity (*anagkē*); see 231a, 232a. By saying that Socrates is making explicit what is operative implicitly in Lysias, I do not mean to say that this is *all* that is happening, because the move from plausibility to necessity, along with other, similar moves, is a move toward philosophical adequacy and away from sophistic power games.

³⁵ Commentators frequently take Socrates's assertion about starting a speech with a definition to be a non-contextual declaration about how speeches should progress if they are to progress well, and there is some good reason to do so (cf. 263a-b and the criticism at 264a). Socrates suggests that the Nymphs and Pan, by whose possession Socrates spoke in his speech(es?) (cf. 241e, 279b-c), “are much more artful in making speeches than is Lysias” (263d) because they led Socrates to begin his speech with a definition. While it *may* be Plato's considered view that speaking well requires heading speeches with definitions (a question for the skilled rhetorician to answer with an eye to the contingent features of character the soul-leader must consider; cf. 261a, 271d-272b), we can read Socrates's remarks contextually as a way of showing that, even on Lysias's terms, one needs to direct one's audience to the most suitable “face” (“suitable” being defined not in terms of the reality under consideration but instead in terms of the rhetorician's goal) of the thing under consideration so that one may lead the audience to have desirable (again, not *per se*, but *per rhetorem*) thoughts about that which is under consideration. Presumably an *explicit* definition is not necessary, but the rhetor would need to fix in his auditor's mind the convenient

off instability, then it would be preferable to begin with explicit agreement rather than presupposing some implicit cultural commonplace or resorting to plausibility in the face of disagreement.³⁶

15. Accordingly, Socrates determines that “we should agree upon a definition of love, showing what it is (*hoion t’ esti*) and what power it has (*hēn echei dunamin*)” (237c-d; cf. *Symposium* 201e). Love, as Socrates suggests everyone knows, is a certain desire (*epithumia tis*), and even those who are not lovers desire beautiful things (237d). More specifically, in the anti-erotic speech, love is seen as an irrational passion “led (*achtheisa*) toward the pleasure of beauty,” which takes its name (*erōs*) from the “force” (*rhōmē*) by which it is “violently moved (*errōmenōs rhōtheisa*)” and is “victorious in leading” (*nikēsasa agōgei*) toward “the beauty of the body” (238b-c; translation modified). Importantly, love is here understood as a sub-specification of desire, not coextensive with the full range of desire, as the qualifier *tis* (some, a certain) implies. It is true that love is a form of desire driven especially toward beauty;³⁷ however, the anti-erotic

aspects of that which is under consideration while preventing the auditor from recalling inconvenient aspects.

³⁶ While the majority of commentators tend to side with Socrates in his criticisms of Lysias’s speech, some have argued that Socrates’s criticisms are unfair or miss the mark. For example, Franco Trivigno argues that Socrates is wrong to criticize Lysias for not beginning with a definition of love which would disambiguate it, for its ambiguous character “forms the very core of his argument.” Had Lysias clearly defined love, his speech would be easier to refute. Even without a clear definition heading his speech, Lysias is able to get his audience to see love the way he wants them to see it. Socrates is wrong to criticize the speech on structural grounds, for it is *artfully* artless—it is, after all, a speech given “while already in the process of seducing a boy.” See “Putting Unity in its Place: Organic Unity in Plato’s Phaedrus,” *Literature & Aesthetics*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2009), 156-160. These kinds of arguments are convincing only when one has already *conceded* that Lysias is using language in a way that is proper to norms internal to language. If we accept that language can be ordered to persuasion *irrespective of truth* (cf. 158)—a claim the latter third of the dialogue takes some pains to refute—then indeed, Socrates’s criticisms miss the mark. But if Socrates is holding Lysias to a higher standard of speaking than mere persuasiveness, then Socrates’s criticisms are apt. Ferrari makes an argument to this effect; see *Listening to the Cicadas* 47-59.

³⁷ The distinction between desire (*epithumia*) and love (*erōs*) in Plato is surprisingly difficult to draw. In his classic article, “*Erōs, Epithumia, and Philia* in Plato,” *Phronesis*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1968), Hyland suggests the two are distinguished by the presence of rationality in *erōs* and the absence of rationality in *epithumia* (37); cf. *Question of Beauty*, 54, 69-70, 75. In a response to Hyland’s article with the same title (*Apeiron*, Vol. 15, No. 1 [1981], Joseph Cummins argues that “Hyland presses too hard to find verbal consistency.” Rather, “Plato uses considerable variety in his terminology for human appetency, a variety which advises

speech's account is not the whole truth of love, as the Palinode will show (preliminarily, we might note that the Palinode will 1. suggest that love is led by beauty's "call" and the gods' care rather than through some kind of violence, though the current description is probably true for *humanly* mad lovers, and 2. that the two speeches present love as having different relations to beauty, for the anti-erotic speech specifies that love is ordered toward the *pleasure* of beauty, whereas the Palinode takes love to be ordered toward Beauty itself). Indeed, Socrates noticeably pauses his speech to acknowledge that he seems to be "caught in the grip of a divine passion" (238c) right after giving this definition, forcing us to pause in turn in order to consider its truth and adequacy.³⁸ "Lady Rhetoric" never claims that rhetoricians should be *ignorant* of truth (260d); indeed, the success of rhetorical deception is predicated on accurate discernment of "the similarities and dissimilarities of things," and this discernment requires some access to the truth concerning that which one is discerning (262a-b). The problem, as we shall see, is that it is difficult to distinguish erotic desire from the desire for *pleasure* to which

the interpreter to rely first of all upon context when considering the significance of the occurrence of this or that term" (10). Importantly, Cummins notes that Plato sometimes distinguishes a specific sense of *epithumia* ("an intense, unreflective craving") from a generic sense (cf. 13-14) and that there is a notable range of meanings for *erōs* in Plato (15-16). More recently, Gordon has argued for a firm distinction between *erōs* and *epithumia*. Whereas *erōs* is a "desire for being and wholeness," which signals the divine with which we desire to be reunified, and which entails an active pursuit of its object, *epithumia* is a passive appetite with no connection to the divine and noetic (see *Plato's Erotic World*, 6, 8, 12-13, 48). This chapter will claim that there is a distinction to be made between *erōs* (properly understood) and the desire for pleasure as two types of *epithumia* in the general sense (per Cummins). Desire for pleasure is a type of the specific sense of *epithumia*, justly censured by Plato. Hyland's and Gordon's claims about the distinction between *erōs* and *epithumia* hold and are reflected in the *Phaedrus* if we restrict *epithumia* to the specific sense (for Cummins has given good reasons for not insisting on a strong distinction between *erōs* and *epithumia* in the general sense). Following Gordon, we can say that the desire for pleasure draws us toward unreality, whereas *erōs* is the longing for our return to the forms. We will develop further the role of *erōs* in Chapter 4.

³⁸ Despite putting forward a fixed reference point at the beginning of his speech, it is clear that Socrates thinks that that reference point, and the speech that follows thereafter, are inadequate, for he attempts to cut the speech short and flee before praising the nonlover and being fully ensnared by the Nymphs (241d-242a). Even simply ending the speech after the condemnation of humanly mad love constitutes an offense against Eros (cf. 242c-e), because in omitting the full truth, which would require a praise of the divinely mad lover, the speech would present a partial truth *as if* it were the whole truth, and thus would distort the veracity of that partial truth. On the significance of the interruptions in Socrates's first speech, see White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 42-44, 61-63.

it is liable to be reduced, and this is why Socrates's anti-erotic speech depicts the soul as a kind of battleground between two forces in the soul, to which we now turn.³⁹

16. Just as Lysias saw that the lover vacillates between the sickness that is love and sound-mindedness, so Socrates begins his anti-erotic speech by demanding that we realize that “in each of us there are two forces (*duo idea*, in the dual) which rule and guide (*archonte kai agonte*, also in the dual) us and that we follow (*bepometha*) both wherever they lead (*ageiton*)” (237d-e).⁴⁰ We will return to the significance of the semantic network of leading (*agein*) and following (*bepasthai*) being evoked in this description below, but for now, we will focus on these two “forms” in the soul. One of the two leading forms, Socrates says, is “our inborn desire for pleasure (*emphutos ousa epithumia hedonei*),” and the other is “an acquired opinion in pursuit of the best (*epiktetos doxa, ephiemenē tou ariston*).” Sometimes they are in agreement (*homonoieiton*), but at other times they are in discord (*stasiazēton*). So far, this description of the two forces vying for control in the soul appears to be the psychological underpinnings of the (humanly mad) lover's schizophrenic activity, as described by Lysias. Socrates continues:

³⁹ Preliminarily, we might say that whereas erotic desire is structurally ecstatic, wherein one's soul moves “outside itself” toward the object of its desire, which it apprehends fundamentally under the aspects of goodness and beauty that awe the lover in their transcendence of her, the desire for pleasure tends toward an “ingestive” (carrying-inward) structure toward the object of its desire, which it apprehends, rightly or wrongly, as the “good-for-me.” An ingestive structure is also present in erotic desire, for in the *Palinode* the language of “nourishment,” “feeding,” and “feasting” is commonly used to describe the soul's way of “taking in” being (cf. e.g., 247c-e), but, significantly, this “ingestive” aspect is posterior to the ecstatic aspect (since the soul had to be “drawn up,” *agein anō*, before it could be nourished) and the mode of “feasting” in the *Palinode* is one in which the “food” transforms the soul into being more like the “food” as opposed to ordinary corporeal feasting, in which the soul transforms the food into the nature of the body. A soul directed by unmoderated desire for pleasure, in the absence of a prior *ekstasis*, would thus be unlikely to behold the object of its desire as an object of *wonder*.

⁴⁰ Because the dual forms have fallen out of ordinary Greek usage by Plato's time and because they only appear in Plato's writings infrequently, we should see the Platonic usage of the dual forms as signifying not just the number of items involved, but also a special conceptual togetherness. Here, the use of the dual implies, in contrast to the psychology developed in the *Palinode*, that these two forces account for the whole story of the soul's internal strife, and so reason's role as another psychological capacity in some sense independent of desire for pleasure and acquired opinion is not just omitted from the speech but *grammatically* excluded.

“When right opinion with reason (*logōi*) rules and leads (*agousēs*) toward the best, we call this moderation (sound-mindedness, *sōphrosunē*). But when desire irrationally drags (*alogōs helkousēs*) us toward pleasures and rules over us, we call this excess” (*hubris*; 237e-238a). This excess “has many names—many limbs and many forms—and when one of these forms happens to be preeminent, a person takes its name” (238a). “Love,” as we just saw, is what we call passionate desire without reason (*aneu logou*) ruling over straight-minded opinion.⁴¹ This passion is led (*achtheisa*) toward pleasure, and when it is moved violently by desire toward bodily beauty, we call it love (*erōs*) because it victoriously leads us there (*nikēsasa agōgēi*) by means of force (*rhōmēs*; 238b-c), just as other tyrannizing passions lead us—immoderately—to other desired pleasures (cf. 238b). This passionate desire for pleasure forcibly drags (*helkein*) the rest of the soul along without a word (*aneu logou*) of persuasion, unable to persuade on account of the absence of reason (*aneu logou*).

17. The lover, under this description, is one who is ruled by desire and enslaved to pleasure (238d). He contrives, “inevitably,” in all that he does to “reap the greatest possible pleasure for himself” (238e), and he preys on weakness in order to do so (cf. 238e-239a). He keeps the beloved weak, both in body and mind (239a-c), and prays that the beloved’s property and family will be taken away (239e), so that the beloved will have nothing urging him to resist the lover’s sickly passion. In all that he does, the lover is “driven on by a compulsion and a sting which bring him pleasure and lead (*agei*) him on” (240c-d), and this compulsion is “to

⁴¹ This is the fundamental point of inadequacy in Socrates’s anti-erotic speech. Here love is taken to be an *irrational* passion, indistinguishable from the desire for *mere* pleasure, which either operates wholly in the absence of reason or subordinates reason to itself. “Love,” we could say “deracinates” reason, insofar as it artificially restricts reason’s activity to its calculative function. In the Palinode, love will come to be seen as a superrational desire for communion. Love is superrationally ordered insofar as it involves a rational activity directed toward that which exceeds that activity’s (unaided) limits; love would thus “lift” reason past the point where a non-erotically-mad reason could go.

pursue pleasure rather than goodness” (239c). The lover’s enslavement to pleasure leads him to dominate and enslave the source of his pleasure and thus to neglect the flourishing of the beloved and, as we shall see, his own flourishing. The lover’s sickness—his madness—is, in other words, nothing other than the fact that his inborn desire for pleasure has been *given* tyrannical reign over the rest of his soul. The only difference, it would seem, between this (humanly) mad lover and the Lysianic nonlover is that the (humanly) mad lover acts without reason (*aneu logou*), whereas the Lysianic nonlover (whom, we recall is a “wily” lover in disguise; cf. 237b) has subordinated his reasoning capacity to his desire, so that he can more effectively pursue the beloved. We cannot forget that both anti-erotic speeches are, essentially, *sales pitches* designed to besmirch the competitor, whose goal is *exactly* the same as the salesman’s.⁴²

18. As Lysias had already suggested, and as Socrates confirms, the (humanly mad) lover, led by his desire for pleasure, is inconstant. When the lover returns to sense, he reneges on all of his past promises (see 240e-241a). When he stops loving and has to make his “return” on all of the beloved’s investments, his manic love is replaced with sound-minded moderation; consequently, he “defaults” (241b) on those promises, leaving the beloved in the lurch. Hence, Socrates draws the following lesson from this “fable” (*muthos*):⁴³ “understand that a lover’s friendship does not stem from kindness but from a kind of hunger and desire for satiety: as wolves adore lambs, so lovers are fond of a boy” (241c-d).⁴⁴ The lover will contrive to keep

⁴² Though Socrates’s anti-erotic speech argues in the same vein as Lysias’s, Socrates does not share Lysias’s aim, as we’ve already noted. The Palinode also aims to seduce Phaedrus, but to call this alternative seduction a “sales-pitch” would be to commercialize something which intrinsically (if not always in practice) *resists* such commercialization and commodification; the fact that Socrates, in contradistinction to the sophists, “doesn’t charge” signifies philosophy’s resistance to commercialization. On this point, see Schindler, “Why Socrates Didn’t Charge: Plato and the Metaphysics of Money,” *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2009).

⁴³ Socrates refers to both speeches he delivers as fables (*muthoi*); see 237a, 241e, and 253c.

⁴⁴ Note that the humanly mad lover and the artless rhetorician are both referred to as wolves. At 272c, Socrates appeals to an old adage: “it’s fair to hear the wolf’s side of the story, too.” The wolf’s side of the story would be the artless rhetorician’s claim that we need not “climb” such a “long and circuitous path”

the boy weak so that he can continually feast upon—or “adore”—his beloved. Lysias had claimed that only good things would come to the beloved from his association with the nonlover, but Socrates *refuses* to make this claim and, instead, abruptly ends his speech right after completing the description of the (humanly mad) lover’s decadent, corrupt and corrupting, love. But if, as Socrates suggested at the outset, the Lysianic nonlover is just a wily lover in disguise, is the nonlover able to make good on his claim that only good things will come to the beloved from their association, or is the nonlover better described as a wolf in sheep’s clothing, who “adores” the lambs no less despite his friendly raiment?

19. While Socrates’s anti-erotic speech does present many of the same basic theses that Lysias’s nonlover had presented, Socrates’s anti-erotic speech differs in two significant ways. First, Socrates *refuses* to praise the nonlover, as we just saw, and instead is ready to flee rather than complete this (humanly) mad speech.⁴⁵ Second, Socrates gives an anthropological (or psychological) account of *why* the lover acts as he does, rather than relying on mere plausibility. In both of these departures, Socrates is elevating the true philosophic content concerning the natures of love, desire, and the human soul out of the sophistic-rhetorical presentation it had been given by Lysias, while jettisoning what cannot be maintained without sinning against Love.

in order to practice rhetoric well, that is, we need not learn the natures of souls, the right use of speeches, and truth, but instead can rely on the plausible argument and opinion (see 273b). Analogously, the nonlover, who is a humanly mad lover in disguise, might claim that we need not climb up to the place beyond the heavens in order to truly gratify our desires, but can instead rely on the plausible argument to persuade our beloveds to gratify us; in both cases, Socrates argues that desire will never be truly gratified without taking the longer road to truth.

⁴⁵ On this point, Nicholson perceptively notes that Socrates’s *daimonion* “does not intrude until *after* Socrates has decided, on his own initiative, to break off the oration, and *after* he has expressed his disgust over his own speech and, by extension, that of Lysias. It is Socrates’ own ethical judgment that terminates the speech, and it would have prompted him to leave, but the supernatural sign requires still more of him, an act of recompense to the god” (*The Philosophy of Love*, 126).

20. In the course of the anthropological account of the soul's discord, Socrates introduces the idea that the soul can be *ordered* by a leading principle. Recall the semantic network of leading and following, of *agein* and *hepasthai*, mentioned above. Socrates uses the word *agein* no fewer than eight times within the four Stephanus pages of his anti-erotic speech in order to characterize how one or another of those leading principles—the desire for pleasure, right opinion ordered to the best—takes control of the soul.⁴⁶ Lysias, by contrast, never articulates any *explicit* ordering principles of the soul, even though, as we suggested above, we can see the implicit ordering of his nonlover's soul (and from there, the implicit ordering of his own soul). It is notable that Lysias uses no 'agogic' terms except *akolouthein* (to follow; a word used only by Lysias in this dialogue), by which he derogatorily refers to following the crowd.⁴⁷

21. As we shall go on to explore, it is *fitting* and *consistent* that Lysias would use no terms for leading and following (barring the exception of *akolouthein*), for these terms, as we shall see especially in Ch. 4, imply that the soul has a *receptive* and *mediated* access to the object of its desire. Lysias wants a secure, autarkical capacity to capture his beloved; he wants a shortcut by which he could avoid the "long and winding path" up which love must be *led* in order to reach

⁴⁶ While the agogic *language* in the anti-erotic speech is largely restricted to the way in which the ruling principles lead the soul toward the goods each seeks, McCoy has noted that the speech itself is an *act* of soul-leading. By leading Phaedrus through his anti-erotic account of the soul, Socrates prepares Phaedrus for the more adequate account of the soul and its leading principles to be given in the Palinode and also leads him to a recognition that "passion untampered by reason can be problematic," a claim that is "never retracted" ("Love and Soul-Leading").

⁴⁷ See 232a (for why we shouldn't follow the crowd) and 233e (for how the crowd blindly follows after the elite). There may be deeper semantic reasons for distinguishing between *akolouthein* and *hepasthai*, both of which mean "to follow." The fact that *akolouthein* is related to *keleuein* (to command), and the fact that *hepasthai* is a middle-deponent may be significant for the argument here. *Hepasthai* in the Palinode is a volitional following, simultaneously for the sake of the common good as well as the good-for-me (the middle voice often modifies an active meaning to be self-benefactive), whereas Lysias's uses of *akolouthein* are consistent with the implicit background fear of threats to one's autonomy (such as being commanded) to be discussed below.

its fulfillment. He wants to subordinate the beloved to his power rather than become reliant on the activity of another for his fulfillment. But if the language of receptivity or of mediation is relevant to love, such a secure, autarkical capacity (at least as understood in the way in which Lysias would understand it) would be *impossible* without sacrificing some fundamental feature of the love relation and thereby turning love into some corpse of love only called “love” incidentally.

22. Despite arguing in the same vein as Lysias in his anti-erotic speech, Socrates focuses our attention on the *causes* of discord in the soul. On the basis of what is said in the anti-erotic speech, however, that discord itself is simply a basic feature of the soul, for inborn desire for pleasure and acquired opinion have nothing to which they can appeal for resolving their disputes as they vie for leadership; it would seem that when they agree, they agree by happenstance, and so their agreement is easily dissolved. The soul’s internal discord, then, shows itself to be a necessary implication of life in a world “structured” solely by power and power relations, wherein the drives of the soul battle for supremacy on account of having neither an internal ordering principle (reason) nor an external ordering principle (a *summum bonum* irreducible to the happenstance wants of a particular soul), as we shall go on to discuss. The soul, like the hundred-headed Typhon, is being torn apart as it is pulled in multiple directions, and we do not yet recognize anything in it which can sooth the discord and order the soul’s two forces to a common purpose, wherein *both* can be fulfilled. How can the soul stop leading itself in two directions at once?

§3. Why Can’t the Soul Genuinely Commune Without Reason at the Helm?

1. The Palinode, as I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, introduces a third aspect of the soul for two reasons, the first of which is to harmonize the soul so that it can

stop going in two directions at once (*epamphoterizēi*, 257b), and this is our concern for the remainder of this chapter (the second reason for the introduction of reason will be discussed more directly later on). Without the recognition of a reasoning capacity *in some sense* distinct from the two forces (*duo idea*) in the soul—desire for pleasure and acquired opinion directed to what’s best (237d)—which were recognized formerly as the *only* leading agents in the soul, the soul’s discord cannot be resolved.⁴⁸ The Palinode simultaneously introduces the possibility of a rationally ordered soul and the possibility of love as a divinely given madness, and these two possibilities—or, we should say, actualities, since they are available in some way to every human being (as we will discuss in in Chs. 3 and 4)—are introduced in the same speech for a good reason; proper reasoning and proper *erōs* seem to go hand-in-hand or, perhaps, even to converge.⁴⁹

2. We will first discuss the rationally ordered soul, as depicted in the Palinode, in order to see how the Palinode revises the anti-erotic speech’s anthropology. The introduction of reason, we will see, does not amount simply to the introduction of a new leading principle but also to a transformation of the character of the two motive forces (§3.1). Then, we will consider the various ways by which the soul fails to come into communion with being, and

⁴⁸ We must say that reason is “in some sense” distinct from the two motive forces because, properly speaking, the whole human soul is rational, albeit not in a univocal way. We might say that the charioteer is (human) reason *simpliciter* whereas the two motive forces have a kind of participatory rationality on account of being naturally subordinate to reason (which is, perhaps, part of the reason why Socrates surprisingly presents the lusty horse as engaging in rational activity; cf. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 190ff.).

⁴⁹ See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 67 for how we see this in the Palinode. Likewise, Schindler argues for the same point in the *Republic* (with special reference to 477d); see *Plato’s Critique*, 102, 134, 230-231. Both love and reason characterize the *whole* soul and not just one part of it, and when love and reason are rightly ordered, they stretch themselves out toward communion with the forms (on this point, see also McCoy, “Love and Soul-Leading”).

Both love and reason depend on the same things and accomplish the same things. They both are directed to communion with the whole of each thing, take their measure from their object, and are essentially ecstatic.

thereby fails to achieve its satiation when reason is absent or subordinated to the motive forces. We will consider the soul's failure to achieve satiation from two angles: first, how the soul fails to achieve its own stated goals when it allows one of the motive forces to lead (§3.2-3.3), and second, how the soul must inevitably fail to achieve satiation when it pursues a certain kind of good (§4).

3. Socrates broke off from his anti-erotic speech *in medias res*, fearful of becoming fully possessed by the Nymphs of the grove. He is visited by his "daimonic spirit and its customary sign," and this spirit "always restrains" him when he's about "to do something wrong" (242b). Socrates hears a voice which will not permit him to leave until he has purified himself on account of an offense he has committed against the divine. Socrates realizes the offence he has committed in his anti-erotic speech when he recalls a verse from the poet Ibycus: "bringing harm upon the gods, I win honor among men" (242c-d).⁵⁰ By gratifying Phaedrus's desire that he "one-up" Lysias in praising the nonlover, Socrates has offended Eros while being drugged (*kata pharmakeuthentos*) under Phaedrus's spell (242e). Freed from Phaedrus's beguilement (a point which we will consider in more depth in Ch. 5), Socrates now asserts that Eros is some kind of divine being, who "could not be bad in any way, although both speeches spoke just now as if he were" (242e).⁵¹ Socrates will thus invoke the purifying ritual known to Stesicohrus (243a) called a "Palinode," in which, singing again (*palin oide*), he will disclaim the prior account

⁵⁰ The fact that Socrates only clearly understands his "sin" after recalling the verse from the poetic tradition (as the verb tenses imply; see Scully's note *ad loc.*) is significant both for Socrates's engagement with language (as we'll discuss in Ch. 6) as well as for the point about the role of mediation and being led to be discussed in Ch. 4.

⁵¹ Some take the fact that Eros is presented as a god in the prelude to the Palinode (242e) and as an intermediary *daimonion* in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* (202e) as an indication that the accounts of love in the two speeches are incompatible. White, however, has given good reasons for seeing no incompatibility here; indeed, the intermediary character of love is preserved, albeit within a different presentation of the gods' ultimacy (see *Rhetoric and Reality*, 55-56), a point to which we will return in Ch. 3.

on account of it being “not genuine” (*etumos*; cf. 243c-d), proffering instead a new account, “keeping [his] head bare this time and not covered as before in shame” (243a).

4. Though Socrates has accused the prior account of being disingenuous and of having caused an offence against Eros, once again, the relationship between the account to come and the account already delivered is not simply re- or dis-placement, but also one of continuity and development, wherein the old account is situated within and evaluated from a more adequate perspective. Thus, we need not—and ought not—forget what the prior account had said about the civil war for leadership occurring between the motive forces of the soul, for this account will be reworked within the Palinode and also continues to be instructive for us as a description of the existential situation into which we find ourselves thrown. Likewise, Socrates never retracts his fustigation of the humanly mad lover (which, as we shall see, turns likewise into a critique of the nonlover), but instead turns to praise the divinely mad lover and to censure the person in whom mortal moderation holds exclusive sway. We can see the Palinode, then, as a kind of surprising fulfillment of the prior speech, for it completes the task of evaluating the possible modes of being involved, or refusing to be involved, in a love relation.⁵²

§3.1 The Introduction of Reason and the Transformation of the Two Forces

5. Do the two forms (*duo idea*) of the soul—desire for pleasure and acquired opinion directed to what’s best (237d)—have analogues in the Palinode’s mythic depiction of the

⁵² Griswold also suggests that the anti-erotic speech “prefigure[s]” and “anticipates” the Palinode in significant ways (*Self-Knowledge*, 67); see also McCoy, “Love and Soul-Leading.” Socrates later refers to the prior speeches, surprisingly, as two in number (using the dual) instead of three (see 262d), even as he refers to them immediately beforehand as three in number (see 262c, since Socrates refers to the speeches Phaedrus and Socrates produced, as distinct from Lysias’s, in the plural). Commentators disagree on how to understand the enumeration, but from the perspective of the relationship between Socrates anti-erotic speech and the Palinode just suggested, it would seem natural to understand those two speeches as one.

charioteer and her team of horses, or are the resemblances merely superficial? I suggest that these two forms of the soul are recontextualized as the two horses which supply motivity to the soul. While it may seem that Socrates has merely mythically imagined in the Palinode what he had non-mythically articulated in the anti-erotic speech, it is crucial to note that the two motive forces of the anti-erotic speech been recontextualized specifically as *subordinate by nature* to reason.⁵³ That is, the two motive forces have been elevated out of an inadequate—and thereby distortive—context to a more adequate context in which they can be seen for what they really are, for the first time.⁵⁴ One can only become “something simpler and gentler, having a share by nature of the divine and the unTyphonic (*atuphon*)” (230a) when the complex motive forces of the human soul are ordered by and to that which has this divine, “unTyphonic” nature.⁵⁵ As we will see, a soul in whom disordered desire for pleasure reigned would be “more complex” and “more tumultuous” than the hundred-headed Typhon because it would be pulled in opposite directions toward various sources of pleasure. Only when such a desire is restrained and no longer hegemonic will the soul become something simpler and more like the divine. Given that the gods’ souls are later described as if they were charioteers with teams of wholly good horses acting in a harmonized unity under the charioteers’

⁵³ Cf. Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 264.

⁵⁴ Fussi makes a parallel claim: when the parts of the soul are wingless, they are dehumanized, whereas when they are winged, they regain their properly human roles: *merely* consumptive desire becomes human desire, arrogance and vainglory becomes spiritedness, and sophistic reason becomes truth-seeking reason (see “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 60-61). See also Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, 249. Belfiore explores Socrates’s use of choral dance imagery in the Palinode to substantiate this claim, arguing that reason harmonizes the two horses by means of the dance. Choral dance, *sumposia*, and other similar communal activities allow for order to be imposed on disorder (as in the case of the young, who tend to be ruled by their wily horses) while also upsetting and quickening the stale inertia that masquerades as order (as in the case of the old, who tend to be ruled by their obedient horses). My account largely converges with Belfiore’s. We’ll return to dance imagery in Ch. 6.

⁵⁵ Socrates punningly connects the name of the hundred-headed monster to the words *tuphomai* (to be ablaze, to be caught up in a passion) and *atuphos*, the negative of *tuphos* (fever; by extension, delusion, nonsense, vanity). To be “unTyphonic” (*atuphos*) is to be without fever, undeluded, sensible, and humble; see Scully’s note *ad loc*.

direction, becoming like the gods would seem to require that our souls become harmonized under the charioteer's direction once the horses are well-trained; hence, becoming simpler and more divine means having a harmonized soul in which reason is directive. We *are* in accordance with that toward which we direct ourselves, being drawn into unifying simplicity or self-defeating complexity according to the nature and exercise of our loves.⁵⁶

6. If we understand the two motive forces to be naturally subordinate to reason (if not yet actually subordinate, given the existential condition of discord into which we find ourselves thrown), we will see that discord in the soul is not a brute fact of human existence, as Socrates's anti-erotic speech suggests. Rather the soul's internal discord is caused by reason's failure to harmonize and direct these two motive aspects of the soul (whether or not reason is "at fault" in this failure would be a further consideration).⁵⁷ As such, our condition can be changed (as we'll discuss in Ch. 3) and must be so changed if we are to achieve the fulfillment and nourishment for which we long. This change in condition occurs when we work on our internal ordering such that reason is restored to its natural position as the soul's directive capacity (cf. Ch. 4). The fact that the horses are subordinate by nature to the charioteer (*hēniochos*; more literally, the "reins-holder"), and thus that the two motive forces are subordinate by nature to reason as a directive capacity, is implied by the way in which Socrates introduces the mythic image of the soul:

⁵⁶ It should be noted that while we become simple by loving, knowing, following, and ultimately, communing with what's simple, our new-found simplicity and the simplicity of that with which we commune are to be understood as analogous, not univocal, terms (cf. *Sophist* 245a). While "really real reality" (247c) is simple, we only "have a share in" (*methexis* = *meta* + *echein*) or "partake" (*participare* = *pars* + *capere*) of simplicity; cf. McCoy, "Love and Soul-Leading."

⁵⁷ Griswold errs on this point by taking our *mere* condition—vitiating as it is by strife and envy (about which, see especially Fussi, "As the Wolf Loves the Lamb")—as indicative of our *natural* condition on account of the the violent competition we see in the non-divine souls' attempt to follow the gods to the superheavenly place; see *Self-Knowledge*, 99. We will give grounds for rejecting Griswold's Hobbesian reading of the ascent in Ch. 3.

Let us liken (*eioketō*) the soul to the innate power (*sumphutōi dunamei*) of a winged team of horses and a charioteer (*hupoterou zengous te kai hēniochou*). All of the gods' horses and charioteers are themselves good and from good stock, but the situation of other horses and charioteers is mixed. For us men, *first of all* (*proton*), a charioteer rules over (*archōn*) and guides (*hēniochei*) a pair of horses, and *secondly* (*eita*), one of these horses is noble and good and from like stock, but the other is the opposite and from opposite stock. So, for us chariot-driving (*hēniochēsis*) must be difficult and irksome. (246a-b; emphasis added)

For human beings, the description of the charioteer ruling and reining in (*hēniochēsis*) the horses is prior to any description of what the horses are like. Regardless of whether charioteer successfully reins the horses, doing so is his role, and the soul will not move harmoniously unless the charioteer does reins successfully. The charioteer is later identified with intellect (*nous*) when Socrates describes how the “place of Being, the Being that truly is (*ousia ontōs ousa*)” is “visible to the mind (*nōi*) alone, the soul's pilot (*kubernētēi*)” (247c). It is the intellect, or thought, that is “nourished” by what it is ready to receive when it meets true being (247d).

7. Given what was just said about recontextualization, we should expect that the Palinode's descriptions of the two horses should, in many ways, hearken back to the anti-erotic speech's descriptions of the two motive forces of the soul (desire for pleasure and acquired opinion ordered to what's best), but under noticeable transformations, given that they are now naturally subordinate to reason (even if this normative condition is unfulfilled in practice) rather than being capacities to which reason is subordinate or from which reason is absent. And this is just what we see.

8. The good horse, who is obedient to the charioteer (253d) is a lover of honor, has a sense of moderation and shame, and is a “companion of true opinion (*alēthinēs doxēs*) [...] ruled (*hēniocheitai*) by command and word (*logōi*) alone” (253d).⁵⁸ The obedient horse, upon beholding the beloved, is constrained by shame and restrains himself (253e), only following the

⁵⁸ Buccioni gives good reasons for suggesting that *alēthinēs doxēs* should be translated as “genuine glory” rather than “true opinion” (both translations are possible without reference to any contextual reasons for adopting one or the other); cf. “Psychical Forces,” 335, note 10, along with 340-345. My interpretation of the white horse's role permits both senses of *alēthinēs doxēs*.

disobedient horse into wantonness unwillingly (254b). Likewise, as Socrates said in his anti-erotic speech, “when right opinion with reason rules and leads toward the best, we call this moderation” (237e). The good horse concerns himself with right opinion, *thumos* (spiritedness), honor, and moderation; the only difference between the former and the later depictions—aside from equinity—is that the former saw right opinion *leading* with or by means of reason (*logōi* as the instrument of right opinion’s leading), thus indicating that reason was subordinate to right opinion, whereas here the good horse is *led* (or reined, *beniōchēsis*) by reason (*logōi* as the means by which the horse is led, indicating the horse’s subordination to the charioteer), naturally obedient to its commands, and only involuntarily insubordinate to reason.

9. When not subordinate to reason, acquired opinion is reducible to socially-defined “right opinion,” or custom (as we noted above). It becomes obsessed with being honored rather than being worthy of being honored (thereby confusing sign and signified).⁵⁹ The white horse reflects this social orientation in its concern for shame, moderation (*sōphrosunē*), and honor (*timē*), “a crucial, if not the most crucial, communal value [...] deeply embedded in the public sphere.”⁶⁰ *Sōphrosunē* is especially dear to the white horse because it is that which resists *hubris* (insolence, the transgression of one’s limits, and the failure to respect the moral and legal rights afforded to one’s fellow citizens by one’s society), a key feature of the white horse’s yokemate, as we shall see.⁶¹ It is clear that in both speeches, this aspect of the soul will *not*

⁵⁹ Cf. Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, 252.

⁶⁰ Buccioni, “Psychical Forces,” 342. Buccioni also notes that *atimia* (dishonor) “is defined as loss of citizen rights and privileges” in Athenian legal terminology, whereas *timē* (honor) is “the enjoyment of full citizen status, is constitutive of a man’s self-identity” (341-342).

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 345: “Both *sōphrosynē* and the ability to follow rules are crucial preconditions for human communal living. Unchecked selfishness, intemperance, and defiance against order, on the other hand, make communal life impossible. [...] *Hybris* and honour are antithetical to the extent that *hybris* issues from an inflation of oneself, whereas honour emerges from the communal. A person who treats others

attempt to lead the soul to act on its desires without being directed to do so by something else taking charge; indeed, an insubordinate white horse may be *too prone* to resistance and inertia (this fact will be significant for section 3.3 below).⁶² When subordinated to reason, by contrast, the white horse becomes something like a social conscience, what Buccioni calls the “communal force,” concerned with maintaining good social order and good repute as a reflection of reason’s commitment to truth; an insubordinate white horse might care for good repute *at the expense* of truth, whereas a subordinate white horse cares about good repute *as a reflection* of truth.⁶³

10. Just as that part of the soul concerned with right opinion, moderation, and honor consistently will not try to act on the soul’s unsociable desires without being directed to do so, so that immoderate part of the soul concerned with the desire *for pleasure* will *always* try to act, when un(res)trained, on the soul’s desires, on its own authority, regardless of what any other part says. It is this headstrong and insatiable character (cf. 238e) that leads the soul into discord more than anything else.⁶⁴ It should be noted that this horse is directed specifically to pleasure;

with hybris intends to elevate himself above other people. If solely hybriatic, the act shows contempt for others, and therefore, breaks the common bond and violates the shared sense of honour.”

⁶² Cf. Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, 252. Luc Brisson argues that since jealous envy (*phthonos*) is not truly directed toward particular material goods, like sexual pleasure, it is a vice of the white horse rather than the black horse when the white horse is disobedient to the charioteer; see “The Notion of *Phthonos* in Plato,” *Emotions in Plato*, eds. Laura Candiotta and Olivier Renaut (Boston: Brill, 2020), 209-210.

⁶³ Substantiation of this point will have to await Ch. 4. But for the moment, note that the obedient horse, “from a sense of shame *and reason*” (256a; emphasis added), cooperates with the charioteer in resisting his yokemate.

⁶⁴ If the disobedient horse is *always* inclined to disobedience and to the pursuit of its lusts, in what sense could it be *naturally* subordinate to reason, as the obedient horse more obviously is? Textually, it seems like it must be, insofar as the horses were described as under the rule and rein of the charioteer. Is this an inconsistency? No, but it does force us to realize that “by nature” is “said in many ways,” as Aristotle recognizes. Though the disobedient horse is not *disposed* “from birth” to obedience, and so in that sense is not ordered to the charioteer “by nature,” in a deeper sense it is a normative requirement of human flourishing that the disobedient horse be brought to obedience in order for us to fulfill, to the extent possible, our deepest desires and longings, and so nature “intends” (in a teleological sense) for this process of training to happen (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a11-27). The Palinode goes on to describe that the dark horse too is—and *ought to be*—fulfilled when the soul is rightly ordered and not, as some think, something that needs to be *simply* suppressed or cast aside on account of being “an ineradicable

thus, it does not represent desire *simply*, which is a more ambiguous phenomenon, as we've noted. This horse, "a companion of wantonness (*hubris*; cf. 237e-238a) and insolences, [...] scarcely obedient to whip or goad" (253e), initially ignores the charioteer's attempt at restraining him in order to try to "mount" the beautiful beloved. His concern is for pleasure, and he will do whatever he can to obtain it, whether that requires abusing the charioteer for his cowardice (254c), or compelling the charioteer and good horse to advance against their will (254d). "Forcing (*biazomenos*), snarling, dragging (*belkōn*), it makes them approach the darling again to deliver the same words" (254d), all for the sake of the "delight of sex" (254a), and even "unnatural pleasure" (cf. 250e-251a). Recall that Socrates had previously etymologized *erōs* as coming from force, and spoke of it as "victoriously leading" the soul, violently, toward the *pleasure* of beauty. To the extent that the desire for pleasure is *unrestrained* by reason, it becomes consumptive, predatory, and "lupine."⁶⁵ While, as we'll see, the dark horse is in some sense responsible for the whole soul coming to Beauty by pulling the whole soul towards the beautiful beloved, the dark horse does so incidentally to the extent that it is untrained, for its goal is pleasure by means of beauty, not beauty itself.

11. Like the lover of the anti-erotic speech, the disobedient horse is compelled "to pursue pleasure rather than goodness" (239c); unlike that lover, led by his desire for pleasure, the disobedient horse can be *trained*, and thereby subordinated to a rational directive power, which can refocus the soul toward Beauty as such.⁶⁶ The disobedient horse can be made obedient specifically because he is already connected to a rational power that is in some sense independent of the horse's pleasure-pursuing activities (whereby, as we've suggested, the horse

evil in the soul" (Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 248; note that this is not Belfiore's opinion but her description of a common view held by scholars; cf. note 3 for representative examples).

⁶⁵ Cf. Buccioni, "Psychical Forces," 349.

⁶⁶ Cf. Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 216-217.

gains his surprising facility with speech, persuasion, and argumentation). Insofar as the (humanly mad) lover of the first speech he is wholly ordered by irrational desire for pleasure (*epithumias de alogōs hekousēs epi hēdonas*, 238a; cf. *aneu logou*, 238b), he is without a reasoning capacity independent of the desire for pleasure, and so, as a (humanly mad) lover, his desire for pleasure cannot be trained but only resisted with force or “dispelled,” as when the other motive force in the soul (acquired opinion in pursuit of the best) becomes hegemonic in the soul. Only what can listen to reason can be trained. “The vicious horse,” Socrates says, “is heavy and *to the extent that it was not trained well*, it sinks earthward and weighs the charioteer down. At this point, the soul experiences extreme toil and struggle” (247b; emphasis added). The “struggle in the soul” is a result of the vicious horse’s lack of training, not a result of its incorrigibly evil nature. Training the vicious horse may be difficult—it requires frequent bouts of harsh restraint until the horse learns and “follows (*hepetai*) the charioteer’s plan” (254b-e)⁶⁷—but it is not impossible (for, in a teleologically structured universe, what is necessary for a thing’s flourishing can never be *in principle* impossible).

12. All souls are “eager to follow” the gods in the cosmic ascent to true being, but many are “harassed by the horses” and “lack the means” to ascend untrammelled; consequently, they “tramp[le] each other” on account of their vice (248a). If a human soul fails to follow the divine procession, it is, ultimately, *not* on account of the impossibility of following the gods to the “place beyond the heavens”—that is, it is not on account of some fundamental,

⁶⁷ Belfiore notes that Socrates’s characterization of the wily horse with imagery evocative of “the daimonic qualities of satyrs”—imagery which applies equally well to Socrates himself—indicates that “This horse is not purely evil, but resembles a satyr in being a mixture of the bestial and the divine, with an important role in helping the soul return to the rites of the gods” (ibid., 249). In giving the wily horse his own qualities, Socrates creates “a playful self-portrait that appeals emotionally to Phaedrus, while also conveying important information about his own daimonic art. [...] Like [the myth’s] love, Socrates has a black horse, and therefore needs to repeat the struggle again and again in order to tame the unruly aspects of his own soul” (ibid).

incorrigible incapacity of human nature or of the human condition, as we'll argue in Ch. 3—but instead on account of some human error,⁶⁸ either in the particular soul's mistaken way of living life through (*diagein*, to be explored in Ch. 4), as discussed at the end of the Palinode, or in the social, political, and/or familial failure to *train* the soul in a way conducive to the ascent.⁶⁹

13. While some souls are “maimed because of the charioteer's wrongdoing” (248a), it seems likely that the charioteer's wrongdoing is not some positive vice of reason, but instead occurs on account of relinquishing his reins (*bēniōchēsis*) to the black horse's usurpation, thereby allowing the black horse to determine the whole soul's direction (cf. 254a-b), in much the same way in which Lysias's nonlover seems to have subordinated his rational capacity to the pursuit of pleasure. The charioteer's wrongdoing is in his failure to be a good charioteer, in his failure to properly use the reins to direct the horses where they ought to go. Analogously, reason's

⁶⁸ This distinction in sources or causes of failure to fulfill the longing of the human soul between a connatural incapacity and a contingent human error is what distinguishes Nussbaum's understanding of tragedy in Plato (to which, she claims, Plato is at one stage in his life blind and at a later stage sensitive; see *Fragility*, ch. 7) from the one shared by Roochnik, Griswold, and Hyland. We will return to Plato's sensitivity to the contingencies of the human experience, especially of the human experience of interpersonal love, in Chs. 3 and 4. Preliminarily, we can say that Nussbaum is right to see the *Phaedrus* as sensitive to the possibility of tragedy resulting from contingent human error though wrong to think this is a “new” feature of Plato's “later” thought.

⁶⁹ Each source of failure—the particular individual in her choices and the society in its formation—could in turn, according to the common line of argument in Plato, be traceable to a failure in knowledge (“intellectualism”). However, the Platonic claim that one never does wrong knowingly needs to be understood within the conceptual network operative in Plato, wherein the intellect and the will have not yet been pulled apart as two fundamentally distinct, even autonomous, faculties as they are in late medieval and early modern thought. So, if we say, in Platonic terms, that one's moral failure is a failure of knowledge, this does not mean that the failure is a failure of the intellect *to the exclusion of* the will, as it might sound to us given the sedimentation of the concepts and distinctions as we've received them. Knowledge, for Plato, involves not just the reception of content but also the proper orientation toward the principles of knowledge. A failure to act in such a way that one bears witness to what one knows, if one knows the really real realities, would thus be a failure to bring knowledge to its completion (see Ch. 6). On these points, see Schindler's *Freedom From Reality: The Diabolical Character of Modern Liberty* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2017), 302ff.

wrongdoing is *not* in its being reason, but in its failure to rationally order the motive forces of the soul; we could say, then, that reason's wrongdoing is rather in its *failure to be* reason.⁷⁰

14. But when reason *trains* the disobedient horse so that he becomes obedient and ceases his “wanton excess” (254e), the horse “follows (*hepetai*) the charioteer’s plan (*ton hēnoiochou pronoia*) [...]”. Then at last it actually happens that the lover’s soul follows (*hepesthai*) the darling with awe (*dediuian*) and a sense of shame (*aidoumenēn*)” (254e). The horse follows (*hepasthai*); it is not dragged (*helkesthai*). The horse is co-active with reason’s guidance, not passive to reason’s violence. When desire for pleasure obediently follows reason, then and only then can the whole soul behold the beloved in *wonder*, as something whose reality both resists reduction to the lover’s own power and makes a (normative) claim on the lover’s conduct; no longer does the lover see the beloved as just another tasty morsel to get under its power.⁷¹ While “pleonectic” desire for pleasure, characterized by its continuous grasping for *more* (*pleonexia* = *pleion* + *echein*), *may* be directive for the soul, it need not be, and *ought* not be; indeed, it ought not be the directive power even *for the desire for pleasure’s own sake*.

15. Only the charioteer, or the reasoning activity of the soul (or, better said: the reasoning *receptivity*, as we’ll go on to discuss), can ensure that all three activities of the soul are harmonized, uniformly directed, and nourished. If either of the other aspects becomes

⁷⁰ Accordingly, Plato has a good response to his postmodern critics who take his notion of reason to be tyrannical. Reason is not tyrannical when it is being true to itself, though it certainly can become tyrannical when it falsifies itself by directing itself toward something other than its proper object (being, truth, and the whole). Reason becomes tyrannical not when it transgresses its limits but when it sets its bar *too low*. Rather than thinking that a kind of skeptical humility is the antidote to a reason become tyrannical and sickly, we should instead insist on reason being true to itself by grasping for its proper object *wholeheartedly*. Reason can only become properly humble when it is directed to the fullness of its proper object, which entails allowing itself to be *measured* by its proper object. On this point, see Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, ch. 1, as well as *The Catholicity of Reason* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013), ch. 1, especially 22-32.

⁷¹ We’ll develop this point further in Ch. 4.

directive, the whole soul, and each of its aspects, will fail to be nourished. The disobedient horse's mutiny is, in a word, counter-productive *even for its own aims*.⁷² Likewise, if the soul fails to achieve direction at all, and instead continues to vacillate, without reason's guidance (*beniochēsīs*), between the direction of one or the other of the motive forces, the soul will fail to be nourished. Reason, then, must rein in its horses so that the whole soul may be nourished, *for reason cannot go whither it lists without the motive force supplied by its winged steeds*.⁷³ Desire for pleasure cannot restrain itself from devouring its object without reason's imposition of measure (§3.2), and socially-conscious moderation cannot break out of its fear of offending the other without reason's prodding (§3.3).

§3.2. Path of Despair 1: Decadent Desire—A Love that Kills

16. Neither desire for pleasure nor sound-mindedness can fulfill the soul's desire without being subordinated to and co-active with reason. However, the soul is led into different forms of unfulfillment depending on which of the motive forces takes the lead. This subsection will explore what happens when desire for pleasure leads; the next subsection will explore what happens when mortal moderation without divine madness becomes hegemonic.

⁷² This point is why I opt to describe the problems that attend the absolutization of either desire for pleasure (§3.2) or mortal moderation (§3.3) by reference to Hegel's "path of despair" (*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018], §78). Hegel uses this phrase to describe his phenomenological method of observing the way in which various "shapes of consciousness" postulate their own understandings of how reason relates to its object only to inevitably fail to succeed in doing so until reason finds itself in right relation to its object. Analogously, we'll watch how a soul in whom desire for pleasure or mortal moderation is hegemonic postulates for itself its goal and inevitably fails to meet *even its own* goal until the soul adopts an internal order that is conducive to its true nourishment and flourishing. Since the charioteer cannot appeal to the superheavenly forms in his attempt to cajole the horses—because only the charioteer sees what's out beyond the heavens (247), and so they couldn't understand the appeal (see Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*, Ch. 3, sections 4 and 5)—we have good reason for such an approach.

⁷³ On this, see especially Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 251 and Fussi, "As the Wolf Loves the Lamb," 55.

17. Desire for pleasure, if left to its own devices, becomes *consumptive*.⁷⁴ It preys on weakness and strives to keep its object weak (see 239c-d), so that it may continually extract pleasure from its object. But in the process of doing so—assuming it is unhindered—it destroys the very thing it needs to preserve in order to continually achieve its goal. There is thus a certain *irony* in the absolutization of the desire for pleasure: when this part of the soul becomes hegemonic and pursues its own fulfillment unilaterally, it fails to secure *even its own* fulfillment (let alone the fulfillment of its confreres). By keeping the beloved weak and soft-minded, disconnected from the world, and enthralled to the lover, the humanly mad lover in his insatiable lust for pleasure prevents the beloved from developing the virtues and friendships (see 239e-240a, cf. 242c-d)—especially that divine friendship with wisdom (see 239b)—which would resist the lover’s tyrannizing (see 238a-c). But in doing so, the lover ultimately evacuates the beloved of all that is lovable, like a spider draining its ensnared victim; in the process of trying to secure the beloved as a perfect source of pleasure, the lover molds the beloved into a perfectly unpleasant thing, for the beloved is deprived of all goods.⁷⁵ All that remains in the beloved is a nagging reminder of the false promises the lover had made (241a-c). The lover, fueled *only* by desire for pleasure, loves the beloved like the wolf adores the lamb (241d), which is to say, the desirous lover loves the beloved *to death*.

18. When desire for pleasure leads and orders the soul, it thwarts itself. Destroying one object of pleasure, it must move on to the next. In order to ensure a steady stream of pleasure, it must rely on clever tactics for ensnaring new, clueless beloveds, like those addressed by Lysias’s nonlover. The lover becomes a wondrous sophist, promising much (see 240e-241a),

⁷⁴ On this, see Fussi, “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 67; likewise, White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 50-51.

⁷⁵ See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 63: “*Eros is thus self-contradictory* [in the anti-erotic speech]. Nature left to its own devices *cancel[s] itself out*” (emphasis added).

extracting more, and delivering little (241a-b). Likewise, unmoderated desire for pleasure tends to cease being satisfied by the same sources of pleasures and so will seek out new, more extreme forms of titillation, ultimately falling (further) into vice (cf. 250e-251a); this is, after all, the nature of *pleonexia* (cf. *Republic* 586a-b). The unmoderated desire for pleasure, in Socrates's analysis, tends to take the form of a "many-headed beast," stretching itself out in contrary ways toward contrary goals, as Socrates had suggested toward the beginning of his first speech. When desire irrationally drags us toward pleasures, we call this excess, which has "many limbs and many forms—and when one of these forms happens to be preeminent, a person takes its name" (238a). The many-formed, many-limbed nature of excess is an expression of the many-headed nature of *irrational* desire (cf. *Republic* 588c). Just as by following our god in the divine procession, we become like unto that god (see 248a, 252d-253c), acting on the unmoderated desire for pleasure leads us away from the mode of divine-like simplicity available to human beings (cf. 230a) into becoming like itself, that is, into becoming "some sort of beast even more complex in form and more tumultuous than the hundred-headed Typhon" (230a). Desire for pleasure, if left to its own activities, *necessarily* frustrates itself; it is *decadent* in both of the word's primary senses: self-indulgent and decaying. It fragments the soul of the lover even as it reduces the beloved into a non-entity.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The tyrant, who would be the person most able to continually gratify his desire for pleasure, is the one whom Plato takes to be least happy of all human beings, for in his power-lust and injustice, the tyrant shows himself to be enslaved to his desires. He is continually torn apart by their persistent and contradictory demands. The tyrant loves goods like wealth, pleasure, and honor because such goods have the curious feature of not circumscribing his absolute quest for power. The tyrant only pursues goods that don't impose any kind of resistance. As Socrates says in his anti-erotic speech, "For a sick man anything that offers little or no resistance is sweet, and anything that is equal or stronger is hateful" (238e-239a). *Per se* goods like friendship and virtue come to us with demands we have to follow if we are to pursue them well. Building a house requires that we respond to the demands that the reality of the landscape and the material impose on us. But goods like wealth, pleasure, and honor don't come with any such demands, nor do they impose any such limits (as we'll discuss in §4.1). They are "safe" goods to pursue for someone who does not want to be hampered by some pesky reality demanding to be understood and cared for. The tyrant may have all of the instrumental goods he desires, but he will never be satisfied

19. Luckily, the Palinode gives us resources for thinking that neither desire nor pleasure must be understood in this consumptive and self-rendering way. In general, whereas the humanly mad lover's love ruins both lover and beloved, the divinely mad lover's love restores, strengthens, and fulfills both lover and beloved (on which, see Ch. 4); divinely mad love can do so, we shall argue, on account of reason's capacity to order the soul, both internally (so that the whole soul can be unified and thus become most able to accomplish its aims) and externally (so that the unified soul can be directed to that which is actually capable of fulfilling its longing). The divinely mad lover takes great pleasure in his beloved (252a) and is restored in doing so, but, unlike the humanly mad lover, the divinely mad lover's orientation quickly moves past the mere desire for pleasure with the eventual result that both lover and beloved, if they do their work well, will be nourished and fulfilled in a way perpetually unavailable to the humanly mad lover.

20. The soul's initial experience of love is one of undivided focus on the beloved, on account of the affects the beloved causes in or evokes from the lover (see 251d-252b); divinely mad love, however, is not arrested here as humanly mad love tends to be. Like the humanly mad lover, the divinely mad lover is led to neglect family and property in pursuit of the beloved, who is seen to be "the only doctor for her greatest labors and pains" (252a). However, the divinely mad lover, unlike the humanly mad lover, does not fall into the traps of an unmoderated desire, but instead learns to redirect both herself and the beloved toward the god whom they jointly follow (252e). If the humanly mad lover's love is consumptive, the divinely mad lover's love is *ecstatic* (*ek-stasis*, being drawn to stand outside oneself), for the

because *he doesn't even try* to pursue any of the genuine goods—goods like friendship, virtue, justice, wisdom, and above all, truth. In other words, the tyrant gets *everything* he wants, but he gets none of the things he *really wants*. Cf. Mark Johnstone, "Plato on the Enslavement of Reason," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2020), 391.

divinely mad lover, despite beginning with the same affects and experiences as the humanly mad lover, is drawn beyond himself such that those affects are no longer directive in his soul (as we'll argue in Ch. 4). The sight of the beloved's beauty inspires a memory of its journey in the divine procession, allowing the lover to "make contact with a god through memory," thereby being "possessed by [the god] and pick[ing] up his habits and practices to the extent that humans can share in the divine" (253a); out of gratitude to the beloved for this inspiration, and out of a desire to bring the beloved's character into completion, the lover endeavors to "lead (*agousin*) [the beloved] into the service and ways of the god, according to each one's ability" (253b). This manic recollection leads the lover to approach the beloved in a markedly different way compared to how he initially approached the beloved. If, at first, the lover took the beloved as a kind of *instrument* by which he could satisfy his desires and dissolve his pains, now the lover sees the beloved as a good *per se*, irreducible to instrumentality, and worthy of service. The lover thus becomes himself an instrument toward the beloved's well-being.⁷⁷ Importantly, as we shall go on to discuss, the beloved does not *cease* to be instrumentally good, but the lover no longer pursues the beloved as merely an instrumental good.

⁷⁷ The contrast between the lover's initial approach and revised approach parallels the argument Socrates has with Thrasymachus about the nature of *technē* (art, skill, craft), especially the ruling *technē*, in *Republic* I (see especially 340c-342e). For Thrasymachus, *technē* is a kind of effective power which instrumentalizes the object of *technē* for the sake of the artisan. Accordingly, the shepherd herds sheep so that he may eat the sheep and the ruler rules the people so that he may exploit them for his own ends, just as the lupine lover "loves" the beloved for his own gain. In each case, the consumptive element is foregrounded, especially by the references to wolves and sheep (note that in addition to his bestial portrayal of Thrasymachus's conduct in his entrance into the conversation [see 336b-d], Socrates also indirectly refers to Thrasymachus as a wolf at 336d by referring to the folk belief that one would be rendered speechless if a wolf saw him before he saw it; see Bloom's note *ad loc*). Socrates argues, by contrast, that *technē*'s essential concern is the well-being and good order of its object; if it serves the artisan, it does so indirectly, and this is why the artisan requires payment for her service. Filling out the parallel, we could say that the shepherd herds sheep so that the sheep may flourish, the ruler rules the people so that the people may flourish, and the divinely mad lover loves the beloved so that the beloved may flourish.

21. The divinely mad lover's love leads the lover to an ecstatic concern for the (flourishing of the) beloved's soul, just as Zeus, "the great leader (*ho megas hēgemōn*) in heaven" thoroughly arranges and takes care of all (*diakosmōn panta kai epimeloumenos*, 246e). The divinely mad lover is even willing to sacrifice all of her own goods for the sake of the beloved (252a); she genuinely desires to serve the beloved (255a). It is perhaps this providential care for *all*, even for that which is soulless (246b), that best accounts for why the gods are continually making the cosmic circuit (as the present tense in the participles above implies)—the descent from and return to the superheavenly place, specifically for the sake of *leading up* human souls who need help on account of our weakness—in the first place rather than staying, like Hestia, goddess of the hearth, at home (247a).⁷⁸ Such care is exemplified and emphasized in Socrates's concluding insistence that Phaedrus return to Lysias and that he himself go to Isocrates in order to "deliver this report from the gods of this place" (279b) so that they might be rightly ordered in their rhetorical practices. In doing so, Socrates and Phaedrus have become co-active agents of Zeus's providential care. Similarly, we see that throughout the dialogue, Socrates dramatically enacts this co-active providential care with respect to Phaedrus, for Socrates, a servant of Eros, seeks to redirect, transform, and improve Phaedrus's eroticism for Phaedrus's sake (cf. 257a-b; see Ch. 5).

22. The reordering of the lover's activity away from a simple consideration of his own interests toward the beloved's benefit, though contrary to what Socrates claimed the humanly mad lover would do with respect to his beloved, is consistent with the providential vision expressed here and elsewhere;⁷⁹ loving the beloved for the beloved's sake is part of our

⁷⁸ We'll address the gods' place in the *Phaedrus's* metaphysical hierarchy in Ch. 3 and their descent in Ch. 6.

⁷⁹ We'll discuss the providential aspects of the *Phaedrus's* vision in more detail in later chapters.

engagement with providence. Rather than harm their beloveds and keep the beloveds weak, divinely mad lovers strive to do everything they can to help their beloveds become like a god (252e), “without envy or stingy ill-will (*ou phthonōi oud’ aneleutherōi dusmeniai*) toward the darling but in the hope that, trying as hard as they can, they may lead (*agein*) the loved one wholly and entirely to resemble (*eis homoiōtēta*) both themselves and the god whom they honor” (253b-c). Only such a character-building love, as opposed to the debilitating, enervating love of the humanly mad lover, could make possible *return-love* (*anterōs*), that image of love (*eidōlon erōtos*) described in the Palinode (255d-e), to which we will return in Ch. 4. This character-building love helps “the better parts of discursive thinking (*ta beltīō tēs dianoias*) prevail (*nikēsēi*)” and “lead (*agagonta*) toward a regimented life and a love of wisdom,” which in turn allows “all involved” to “enjoy (*diagousin*) a blessed and harmonious life here on earth” (256a-b). The desire for pleasure can indeed be fulfilled (and *should* be fulfilled), but only when it is not trying to overpower the rest of the soul in the attempt to fulfill itself.

23. From the Palinode, in sum, we should learn that desire is not restricted to pleasure, and that pleasure is not “bad” (Plato is neither hedonist nor antihedonist but instead understands pleasure as a finite good in a hierarchy of goods); further, we should learn that an unchastened desire for pleasure has a certain debilitating trajectory, which we can avoid if we train our desire for pleasure in the right way, namely, so as to be subordinate to reason’s direction and rei(g)n. Said differently, the soul cannot enter into communion with its desired object if it tries to do so at the (unilateral) direction of the desire for pleasure, because desire for pleasure, left to its own devices, consumes its object and splits itself apart, thus obliterating both the abiding difference and transcendence of the object of desire and the identity and stability of the desiring subject. But when desire for pleasure is trained and reintegrated into a soul-ordering more proper to the soul’s complete nourishment, when pleasure is accepted as

a kind of *gift* instead of as an all-consuming demand, then the desire for pleasure can be fulfilled without becoming consumptive.⁸⁰

§3.3. Path of Despair 2: Desiccated Moderation—The Refusal to Love

24. “Mortal moderation” (256e)—the socially-oriented force which restrains decadent desire—likewise prevents a genuine communion when absolutized, but for the opposite reason. If desire for pleasure prevents genuine communion on the one hand by obliterating that with which we might come into communion (thereby denying the abiding transcendence of the other) and on the other hand by tearing itself apart, mortal moderation prevents genuine communion by refusing to be open to the other in its disordered self-*possession*. The mortally moderate nonlover transforms moderate self-possession into an immoderate possession of self.⁸¹ Mere mortal moderation keeps the other at arm’s length even as it tries to get itself ever more firmly within its own grasp, systematically closing off anything within itself which looks beyond itself for its fulfillment.⁸² Mere mortal moderation, in other words, overlooks the fact “that both autonomy and the *shattering of that autonomy* by the intrusion of a higher power are *essential* to the nature of man,” as Pieper puts it.⁸³ Mortal moderation closes itself off to anything which intrudes on its autonomy *in the name of* its autonomy and thereby fails to

⁸⁰ At 247e, the charioteer of the godly soul is nourished by true being, goes back home, and then “takes the horses to the manger, providing nectar for feed and ambrosia for drink.” The charioteer does attend to the desire for pleasure, but in the proper order. Aristotle makes an argument to this effect in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.4.

⁸¹ That is, the self-possession of *sōphrosunē*, which would be a kind of proper restraint, self-control, and reaching out (*orexis*) toward genuine goods which are themselves the measure of proper restraint, transforms when absolutized into a kind of desire to possess oneself in the way in which one possesses property.

⁸² As Fussi notes (“As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 66), the anti-erotic speech worries about the stigma that attends “the shame of being dependent upon another” and the “fear of being exposed to a glance that he cannot control.”

⁸³ Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 51 (emphasis added); cf. Fussi, “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 53, 62. See also Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 51: “The nonlover’s praise of self-control assumes [...] inadequate conceptions of reason and desire.”

recognize that while autonomy is a genuine good, it is not the good (for the greatest of good things come to us by way of divine madness, as Socrates claims). As Fussi puts it, she in whom mortal moderation reigns supreme will inevitably suffer from “hyperuranian malnourishment.”⁸⁴

25. Any “congress” into which the sound-minded nonlover comes with another could only be called communion equivocally, unless the nonlover accepts the Socratic accusation that the nonlover is truly just a lover in disguise.⁸⁵ This is, perhaps, why Socrates seems to have harsher words in some places in the *Phaedrus* for the nonlover than he does for the humanly mad lover—at least the humanly mad lover *tried* to come into communion with his beloved and did so with a commendable ingenuousness.⁸⁶ The disobedient horse complains with some rightness of the *cowardice* of the charioteer and his obedient horse (254c). Insofar as the nonlover allows himself neither to be possessed (as by something divine) nor dispossessed (on account of his autarkical desire for security), the nonlover obstinately refuses any kind of relation in which he *does not set the terms*, and thereby acts the tyrant no less than that hubristic desire for pleasure which sets about its task through force.⁸⁷ Though the nonlover might speak

⁸⁴ Fussi, “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 65; cf. Gonzalez, “I Have to Live in Eros,” 235 on Heidegger’s discussion of the Palinode’s “metaphysics of nourishment.”

⁸⁵ The sound-minded nonlover’s communion would be communion incidentally or equivocally in much the way Aristotle suggests that a corpse is a human being in name only and a painting of an eye is an eye in name only, since in each case, the incidental object lacks the capacity to be at work in the way proper to the thing it resembles (see, e.g., *De Anima* II.1 412b10-23). Likewise, though there might be a kind of adjacency and even a kind of fulfillment of sexual pleasure in the (Lysianic) nonlover’s congress with the beloved, the argument of the Palinode suggests that this adjacency and fulfillment of sexual pleasure fails to actually achieve the work proper to love, which is, as we shall argue, a genuine communion with the beloved made possible by and within the genuine communion with being to which love “lifts” (*agein anō*) us.

⁸⁶ Compare 256b (“There is *no greater good* than this that either mortal moderation or divine madness can provide a human being”) with 256e (“But a non-lover’s intimacy is *diluted by mortal moderation* and *pays meager mortal benefits*. It begins in his friend’s soul a *slavish economizing* which most people praise as a virtue but will cause your soul to roam for 9,000 years around the earth and beneath it, mindlessly”); emphases added. See Heidegger’s remark quoted in Gonzalez, “I Have to Live in Eros,” 223.

⁸⁷ On this, see Schindler, “Why Socrates Didn’t Charge,” 409.

of acting for the beloved's good (231b), really the nonlover is simply seeking an enticing object of trade and a profitable deal, as becomes evident when the nonlover states that the beloved's non-exclusivity would "devalue" the trade (234c). Sexual gratification would be a kind of zero-sum game, and so non-exclusivity would necessarily be seen as a threat to the nonlover's self-possession, since he would be deriving fulfillment from something whose value can be modified by circumstances otherwise outside his control.⁸⁸ Insofar as genuine communion requires affirming the abiding transcendence of the other, one cannot enter into genuine communion without allowing the terms to be set by the other, at least in part. In other words, communion is not available to *simply* autonomous agents; all communion must involve an element of heteronomy insofar as the other remains abidingly other and transcendent.⁸⁹ In Plato's universe, whatever autarky there is to be had for the human being is a "participatory" autarky, not autarky *per se* (this is true even of the gods, as we'll see in Ch. 3; only the true beings could be described as purely self-sufficient).

⁸⁸ This is not to say that the nonlover is wrong to insist on exclusivity, but only that his reasons for doing so are wrong. The *Palinode* depicts the best love-relations as not just exclusive, but exclusive within a life-long commitment (cf. 256a-e). But perhaps it would be better to point to the divinely mad lover's *fidelity*, with respect to which exclusivity is a derivative mode of being faithful that is appropriate to the interpersonal erotic relationship but not necessary to the more general relationship of friendship (though perhaps it *is* necessary even in the more general relationship of friendship, for the deeper the friendship, the more individuated it is, and the more it would resist being identified with—let alone substituted for—another relation of friendship). The fidelity in the divinely mad love relationship would be twofold: a fidelity in the lovers' mutual commitment of self, which has as its ground the mutual fidelity to the "regimented life" of philosophy (and thereby to that to which philosophy itself is faithfully committed, namely, *ousia onto ousa* and the forms).

⁸⁹ As we shall see, heteronomy itself is not yet sufficient, for the lover does not allow the beloved to set the terms *simply* (as if the terms were set, perhaps, by a capricious, arbitrary, or wholly undetermined will), but instead the terms are set by the norms written into the beloved for his flourishing. The beloved sets the term by his *being* a certain way (which involves having certain desires and paths of fulfillment "written into" his constitution), not by his *merely wanting* whatever it is that he wants. Thus, it would be better to say that the communion relation requires an element not just of heteronomy, but specifically of "agathonomy," which would be a being-ruled-by the good or a taking-the-good-as-one's-measure (as at *Republic* 504b-505b; cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 205). Both lover and beloved could set the terms as equals within an agathonomously ruled communion because neither would set the terms *merely* as himself in the happenstance state of having various particular desires and wants.

26. Mortal moderation also frustrates itself to the extent to which it simultaneously desires and restrains itself from acting on desire out of fear of being *ruled* by that desire. While the autarkical impulse of mortal moderation is both sensible and deeply Socratic, mortal moderation must fail in its own goal to the extent that, pursued exclusively, it cannot admit “the greatest of all good things,” which come to us through divinely-given madness (244a).⁹⁰ Insofar as it cannot admit a good—let alone the greatest good—it cannot maintain its self-sufficiency and will thus become vulnerable to and reliant on others, which is, of course, precisely what it seeks to avoid. Mortal moderation can only ever truly become self-sufficient, paradoxically, by recognizing a certain, prior, self-insufficiency; there are goods it must have which it cannot furnish for itself by its own unaided activity, and its own activity can only be brought to completion by the prior reception of the good given in and by divine mania.

27. If the analysis of the problem of absolutized mortal moderation holds—if, that is, the absolutization of mortal moderation suffers from a basic *irony* similar to the one we see in the absolutization of the desire for pleasure discussed above—one might wonder whether the language of autarky and self-sufficiency is valuable at all. Rather than affirm a paradox in which one can only ever become truly self-sufficient by recognizing a prior self-insufficiency, why not just get rid of the language of autarky and self-sufficiency and instead cleave simply to the more governing issue of our self-insufficiency (our contingency, our dependency)?⁹¹ A suitable answer—one the substantiation of which will have to await later chapters—is that though there is a sense in which unaided human capacities are insufficient to bring us into a state of

⁹⁰ In his paean to Socrates in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades paints a picture of Socrates as being deeply moderate, self-controlled, and self-sufficient. See, e.g., 214a with 223d, 216d-217d, and 219d-221c. While Alcibiades’s depiction shows Socrates as supremely moderate, this same Socrates is shown to be supremely open to divine *mania* in the *Phaedrus*, as we’ll discuss in Ch. 5.

⁹¹ On the Palinode’s positive evaluation of contingency in the life of the human soul, see Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 133ff, especially 137: “Thus for Plato our moral lives are not led *in spite of* contingency (in Kantian fashion), but become complete through proper dealings with contingency.”

flourishing, there is also a sense in which the divine aid (or, as we'll suggest in Ch. 6, the care that characterizes reality itself), by which we are elevated and "adequated" (*ad + aequus*, to be made equal to) to flourishing, cannot bring us into flourishing unless we *cooperate* with it. Mortal moderation becomes self-sufficient when it is rational; as we'll go on to discuss, being rational entails being receptive to and responsive to reality on its own terms. But rationality—even when aided—is still a *human* act (see Ch. 4). While there is an ineradicable element of dependence in human self-sufficiency, there is a meaningful place for a kind of participatory autarky within that more ultimate dependence. We need not oppose mortal moderation and divine mania, and, indeed, the greatest of goods available to us are acquired by means of both together.⁹² The myth makes this point by emphasizing that we must *follow* the gods who *lead* us to the superheavenly place. In "following," we see the mixture of the perfection of the activity available to us according to our natures and limitations (mortal moderation, which prepares the soul for receptivity by restraining lascivious desire) as well as the capacity of being elevated, in a sense, beyond those limitations. Two conditions are necessary for following: there is no following without the soul's internal harmonization, and there is no following without something distinct from the soul leading it.

28. Accordingly, we can say that just as the Palinode does not indicate that the desire for pleasure is "bad" *simpliciter* (it is bad only when absolutized), so also we can say that the

⁹² At 254b-c, the lover, in seeing the beauty of the beloved, "is carried toward the essence of the beautiful, and once again he sees beauty itself alongside moderation upon a holy pedestal." The beauty of the beloved occasions our *joint* recollection of beauty (the object of desire) and moderation (the safeguard of desire). The description of 256a-b confirms that moderation and an ordering of the whole soul to and by reason allow this divinely mad love to lead both the lover and beloved into "a blessed and harmonious life." "There is," Socrates says, "no greater good than this that either mortal moderation or divine madness can provide a human being," and it seems like the "or" is meant to indicate that neither mortal moderation nor divine madness can supply such a great good alone, but only both together, though not symmetrically, since mortal moderation's role is to prepare the soul to better receive and co-act with divine madness, without which, the work of mortal moderation will have been in vain.

Palinode does not indicate that mortal moderation is “bad” *simpliciter* (it too is bad only when absolutized).⁹³ Rather, the Palinode indicates that both *are* good and ought to be fulfilled (cf. 247e), but they are good in their proper orientation as subordinate to reason.⁹⁴ Both driving forces become problematic—not just for reason, but for themselves too—when they engage in acts of mutiny against the rei(g)ning charioteer. Mortal moderation must be relativized to divine madness, which brings about the greatest of all good things. Mortal moderation without divine madness can never accomplish that which divine madness—or better, divine madness with mortal moderation—can accomplish, as Socrates indicates with reference to prophecy, purification rituals, and poetry.⁹⁵

29. Only with a divinely-given erotic madness can one experience the greatest love and its gifts. “A non-lover’s intimacy,” Socrates says near the end of the Palinode, “is diluted by mortal moderation and pays meager mortal benefit. It begets in his friend’s soul a slavish economizing” (256e). Note that Socrates redirects the accusation the nonlover had made

⁹³ See Jonathan Lavilla de Lera, “The Prayer to Pan of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (279b8-c3): An Exhortation to Exercise the Philosophical Virtue,” *Symbolae Osloensis*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (2018), 91: “In the same way as there is a left-handed and a right-handed love, and in the same way as there is an upper and a lower Pan, the dialogue exhibits a clear distinction between the cold utilitarian calculation of benefits called temperance (*sōphrosunē*), which is not at all philosophical, and philosophical temperance (*sōphrosunē*).”

⁹⁴ We could generalize the point by saying that there is *nothing* in the human being that is by nature “bad” for Plato, not even the body. Instead, something only becomes “bad” to the extent that human action places that element out of its hierarchical place amidst the order of goods. The only meaningful sense in which the body, or the desire for pleasure, can be called bad in itself is by understanding “bad” to mean simply “less good in comparison to ...” (cf. Ficino, *Commentaries*, VII.1). As Joshua Hall notes, saying that the white horse is “good and from good stock” and that the black horse is “the opposite and from opposite stock (*ex enantiōn te kai enantios*)” (246b) does not logically imply that the black horse is intrinsically evil, for it only implies that the black horse is not-good (a class which includes but is not exhaustible by evil); see “Plato’s *Phaedrus* after Descartes’ *Passions*: Reviving Reason’s Political Force,” *Lo Sguardo*, No. 27 (2018), 80. Diotima explicitly corrects a young Socrates when he makes this kind of logical error (see Symposium 201eff.)

⁹⁵ We might also understand the Palinode to outshine the nymph-possessed speech, both in rhetorical flourish and in the profundity of its content, on account of the fact that it both praises and exhibits a divine madness (brought on by Eros) bound together with mortal moderation, whereas the prior speech both discusses and exhibits a divine madness (that brought on by the Muses and nymphs) which seems to be at odds with mortal moderation, as indicated in the fact that Socrates must restrain himself from being fully possessed (we’ll return to this in Ch. 5).

against the humanly mad lover back onto the nonlover: it is the nonlover who keeps score. Neither the nonlover nor the humanly mad lover, it would seem, engages in the love relation for the beloved's sake, and this similarity should not surprise us if the nonlover is indeed just a wily lover in disguise. But the divinely mad lover, by contrast, is able to be reminded of superheavenly beauty by seeing the beloved's beauty as an iconic image (249d, 254b-c),⁹⁶ thereby regrowing his "wings" and regaining the natural capacity to be led back (*agein anō*, 246d) to the true beings (*ta ontōs ontā*).⁹⁷

30. Rather than using the beloved as a kind of "ladder" which can be kicked away once the lover has been led back to beauty itself, the recognition of the beloved as an iconic image of the beautiful directs the lover to treat the beloved with a hitherto unexperienced kindness (255b) and devotion, as if the beloved "were a god" (255a). Further, the divinely mad lover "overflows" (255c) into the beloved, urging the same regrowth of the beloved's wings (255c-d), and enabling the beloved to experience an iconic image of love (255e). Together, these two newly winged souls "enjoy (*diagousin*) a blessed and harmonious life here on earth" (256a-b), in contrast to the "meager mortal benefit" of the nonlover's mortal moderation. Any togetherness of those who "adopt a more coarse way of life, one that loves honor and not

⁹⁶ We'll clarify this point in Chs. 4 and 6.

⁹⁷ It is interesting to note that in ordinary Greek, the *ana* prefix (and its adverbial form, *anō*) can mean both "upward" and "back, return to, again." When one is the patient of *anagein*, one may be being led up, led back, or both. Given that, in ordinary Greek, to "go back up" would be to go up from the port or the sea back to town, the *ana* prefix has a sense of "returning home" (see LSJ s.v. A.1.3 and A.2). In Plato's imagery, the two senses converge: to be led *up* to the forms *is* to be led *back home* to the forms. The "returning-home" aspect is given greater emphasis by a third sense: repetition (as in *anamnēsis*, to remember again = to return home in memory = to return to the highest things). Finally, by extension, "going home" comes to mean "go back to yourself" or "turn inward," and so, *anagein* could also mean being led back into oneself, as when Plotinus says "Go back into yourself and look!" (*Anagei epi sauton kai ide*, *Enneads*, Vol. I, Trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), I.6.9.8.), specifically in the context of Beauty. The spatial metaphor, in Plato, of "being led *up*," opens onto the ideas of being led *inward* to *return* to one's source. See Gordon's analysis of the etymological play on *nous* (mind) and *nostos* (return journey) in the *Phaedo* in *Plato's Erotic World*, ch. 6.

wisdom” (256c), may, at best, be led forward together (*sunagagonte eis*) by their “unbridled horses” (i.e., the obedient horse; cf. 255e) to what is taken as “the same thing” as philosophical friendship, though they will be “not as close as the philosophic couple” (256d).

§4. Resistance to Reality Can’t Lead to Fulfillment in Principle

1. In the prior two subsections, we considered why the two motive forces—desire for pleasure and acquired opinion in pursuit of the best (understood as “mortal moderation”)—symbolized by the Palinode’s two horses would necessarily fail in *their own goals* when those goals are absolutized (or allowed to take a hegemonic role). As we saw, each postulated its own understanding of what would lead to its own fulfillment, but each thwarts itself in the process. We turn now to consider more globally why the kinds of goods they sought cannot *in principle* satisfy the soul’s yearning, which, as the Palinode suggests, is for *reality itself* and which can’t be contented with anything that falls short of the true beings (*ta ontōs onta*); or, better said, the soul’s yearning can’t be contented with anything that falls short of the true beings *unless* it also comes to the true beings. Hence, when the soul seeks to fulfill itself in goods that have—or at least can have—a stilted connection to reality and reality’s “measure” (cf. §1) the soul will necessarily be unfulfilled because it is looking to fulfill its longing for reality by chasing after *unreality* (or, in the common Platonic idiom, in *appearances*; the problem, however, is not in the appearances themselves, but in our forgetfulness of the fact that appearances are only ever appearances *of something*).⁹⁸ We will first consider reality-resistant

⁹⁸ It should be noted in advance that this discussion of the common Platonic trope of the contrast between being and appearance is not the final word on the subject. Here, we are considering appearance when it *opposes itself* to being (alternatively: a finite good when it opposes itself to the Good), and it is this sense of appearance which Plato frequently and justly censures. But as we will go on to discuss, especially in Ch. 6, appearance *need not*, and indeed, *ought not* be opposed to being, but instead can be understood as the glorious manifestation of being. Being does not oppose itself to appearance (alternatively: the Good does not oppose itself to goods; Beauty doesn’t oppose itself to beauties). The argument given here about the problem of choosing goods in the mode of appearances which resist

goods directly (§4.1) and then go on to consider how love and language can *become* reality-resistant when they are pursued for the sake of reality resistant goods (§4.2).

§4.1. Reality-Resistant Goods

2. When discussing the later question about whether and under what conditions rhetoric could be an art (*technē*), Socrates and Phaedrus quickly agree that our words seem to come in two basic forms: about some words, such as “iron” or “silver,” all agree, but about other words, such as “just” and “good,” “we part company both with each other—and with ourselves” (263a). Concerning the first form of words—the common words—we are not easily deceived, but by playing with the ambiguities and disagreements concerning the second form of words—the divisive words—rhetoricians are able to lead us incrementally into deception by playing with similarities (262b). As Socrates’s aside suggests, it is not just the rhetorician’s active playing with similarities that leads us into confusion and deception, for we can easily do this to ourselves and are largely passive to the way in which our cultural and linguistic matrices lead us into certain (often internally inconsistent) understandings of that which the divisive words signify. And as Socrates suggested, “good” is one of these divisive terms, concerning which we are easily confused and deceived. What is it about “goodness,” as opposed to “iron,” that permits such confusion and disagreement? How is it that, on the one hand, the mortally mad lover and the sound-minded non-lover both mistake the good for which their souls yearn, even though, on the other hand, there is some good reason to think that those putative goods toward which they stretch themselves out in their longing are indeed good things? How, in other words, can I fail to achieve my *good* by pursuing *my* good?

reality’s norms should thus be counterbalanced by the fact that these “goods” of appearance can actually be elevated to the status of true goods when understood rightly in relation to reality. A model for this kind of argument could be seen in Book III of Boethius’s *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

3. Socrates resolves this dilemma—both here in the *Phaedrus* and in other dialogues—by distinguishing *appearance* from *reality* (alternatively: seeming from being, reminders from that of which the reminders are reminders):⁹⁹ there are true goods, things which are good by nature and objectively desirable, and then there are apparent goods, things which present themselves as good but which are not, in fact, the object of our deepest longing (though, of course, we might be hoodwinked by the appearance into thinking that we do, indeed, want these apparent goods for their own sake, and this is essentially the situation for the mortally mad lover and the sound-minded nonlover).¹⁰⁰ The distinction between the true and the apparent good corresponds to a distinction in the immediacy of the soul’s contact with reality in the pursuit of the good in question, and so being itself is the measure according to which the true good is true and the apparent good is apparent. As Socrates suggests in *Republic* VI,¹⁰¹ “a measure in such things, which in any way falls short of that which *is*, is no measure at all. For nothing incomplete is the measure of anything” (*Republic* 504c). We must “go the longer way around” (504d; cf. *Phaedrus* 272d) in order to determine what kind of measure would be an adequate measure for the things in question. The measure must be complete or else there will be goods outside of its purview, such that we could set our desires on what seems best but still be missing genuine goods and thus fail to be satisfied. The measure must be adequate to that

⁹⁹ We’ll return to this in Ch. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Note that, once again, this distinction does not imply that the apparent goods are in fact bad, but simply that they aren’t what the soul *really* wants, even though, as we will go on to explore, they can become genuine components of the soul’s satisfaction when approached rightly. Apparent goods can, in fact, be apparent *goods* when their status as *appearances* is recognized and respected, i.e., when they aren’t being pursued as if they were the kind of goods *of which* they are appearances. See, for example, the way in which Schindler argues for a “restoration” of the goodness of money—a reality-resistant good *par excellence*—when it is recontextualized within a proper understanding of the order of goods in “Why Socrates Didn’t Charge” (420).

¹⁰¹ I use the discussion in the *Republic* to make this point because it affords more direct access. If the interpretation of the Palinode’s metaphysical vision given in Ch. 6 is successful, it will provide the background for the same basic point from within the *Phaedrus*. We will also take up in Ch. 6 the question of whether the *Republic*’s “Good beyond being” is absent from the *Phaedrus*, as many claim.

which *is*, that is, must be adequate to *being* as distinct from appearing or seeming, if we are to avoid taking the false as true and to avoid the confusion of the soul's deepest yearning with mere happenstance wanting. Socrates "divines" (*apomanteuomai*, 505e, 506a)¹⁰² three features of our soul's desire with respect to which the measure in question must be adequate:

1. We often choose to content ourselves with opinions and reputations concerning values like beauty and justice, but concerning the good, "no one is satisfied with what is opined to be so but each seeks the things that *are*" (505d). That is, we will never *actually* be contented by a *merely* apparent good.
2. The good is that "for the sake of which" the soul does all that it does (505e). The soul "divines" that there is some good, but it is "at a loss" and "unable to get a sufficient grasp of just what it is." The soul *can't help but* seek the good (the good is, we could say, "irresistible"), though it's not yet sure how to do so.
3. "No one will *adequately* know the just and fair things themselves before [the good] is known" (506a, emphasis added). In other words, we will fail to fully appreciate the good things which we encounter as good until we encounter the good itself, and so even the genuine, *per se* goods with which we come into contact will not yet be for us what they are by nature.

In order to determine what is good for the soul and to satisfy the soul's longing, we must come to an understanding of the way things really are, must come into contact with reality in its "most real" form. We must avoid being *arrested* by opinions and appearances (as opposed to truth and knowledge) and by intermediary goods (as opposed to the final goods to which they point), and when we come into contact with reality, our vision is elevated out of the mere play of appearances into a capacity to see things as they *are*.¹⁰³

¹⁰² The language of divination is striking, and it's not immediately clear why Socrates uses it. As the second claim concerning goodness indicates, the soul is always already in some relation to the Good and has received a certain "foretaste" of it, even if it doesn't yet understand that relation or how to go about consummating it.

¹⁰³ If every good has nothing but derivative value, and if there is no ultimate good for the sake of which we do what we do, then, at the end of the day, *nothing* is good and there are no discernible reasons for why we do what we do. An instrumental good, for example, derives its goodness from that which we obtain by means of it. It does not possess any value in itself. But if each instrumental good only ever brings us to other instrumental goods *ad infinitum*, then the instrumental goods we've pursued will have never been connected to something which supplies their goodness to them. We can think of instrumental goods like power and money as a kind of tofu. Tofu has no real flavor of its own but instead soaks up the flavor of that with which it is served. A meal in which tofu was only paired with more tofu and even more tofu would be an entirely tasteless affair. Or, you could think of instrumental goods like dominoes. If goodness is exhausted by instrumental goods and each instrumental good only refers to the next instrumental good, then the situation is akin to an infinite series of dominoes where the latter dominoes can't fall because there is no first domino to set them in motion in the first place. In order for the

4. The derivative goods with which we come into contact throughout our lives tend to present themselves in two ways. Some of these goods come along with a clear measure of satiation (e.g., the good of food removes the pain of hunger and is registered by a “full belly”), whereas other goods seem to resist any measure at all, and it is these latter goods which are at issue here.¹⁰⁴ Derivative goods like wealth (especially in the form of money), honor, fame, reputation, pleasure, and power all have, or at least tend to have, a tenuous relation to reality because the satisfaction, or at least, the *appearance* of satisfaction, that comes from them does not come out of a direct contact with reality.¹⁰⁵ When these goods are pursued properly, which is to say, when these goods are actually *good*, they point past themselves to some direct contact with reality, and it is in that direct contact with reality that we find genuine satiation. But each of these goods can also be abstracted from that direct contact with reality and pursued for its own sake, as if each were a choice-worthy end; to the extent to which we pursue these apparent goods as ends and not as intermediaries, we defer our contact with reality, even *ad infinitum*.¹⁰⁶

dominoes to fall, we need a first mover. In order for tofu to have flavor, we need a “first flavorer.” In order for instrumental goods to be good, we need a first good which is good *per se*. Plato thus recognizes that any account that fails to give us something like the “first flavorer” can’t tell us why we do what we do in the first place because it can’t explain why we pursue the goods we pursue.

¹⁰⁴ See Schindler, “Why Socrates Didn’t Charge,” 398-403. A longer examination of reality-resistant goods would consider what the other dialogues—especially the *Philebus* and the *Gorgias*’s discussion of the “leaky jar” understanding of happiness—have to say about the matter. What is about to be said about the measure-resisting goods would also apply to the measure-prone goods which are nevertheless pursued without reference to the measure that they put forward. Within the measure-prone class, there are grounds for a further distinction between goods that have an internal measure of satiation beyond which they become unwholesome (as is the case with food) and goods that have an internal measure of satiation into which one can enter ever more deeply, such as friendship and virtue; there is no such thing as “too deep” a friendship or “too much” virtue. Goods like virtue and friendship can have this “ever-more” character without transgressing measure because they are privileged sites for the experience of contact with reality and reflective of the “ever-more” character of reality itself.

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, 402 for Schindler’s argument that money is not, strictly speaking, identical to or convertible with wealth, for money is instead the *appearance* of wealth and a means thereunto. Money is *potential* wealth, not actual wealth (possessing various goods that either are good *per se* or are directly connected to *per se* goods).

¹⁰⁶ Seth Benardete rightly notes that pleasure has no standard of satiation built into it (*The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato’s Gorgias and Phaedrus*, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009], 122.). As we’ll discuss later on, we can never *actually* defer our contact with reality, since we are always

Before returning to the specifics of the *Phaedrus*, it would be helpful to explore briefly the ways in which the class of measure-resistant goods can be pursued well or poorly and the consequences of our pursuits.

5. Whereas the finite goods obtained by wealth and by power come along with an internal measure, wealth and power do not have an internal measure of satiation and can be pursued infinitely. Wealth and power are both instrumental goods since their goodness lies in their capacity to allow one to obtain a genuine good that brings satisfaction to the soul, but when that intermediary character is neglected, the desire for the genuine good that is obtained by means of wealth or power tends to transform into the desire for greater and greater wealth (or power). If wealth (or power) is not measured by what one can obtain by it, from where could it derive a measure by which satiation and sufficiency could be assessed? By suppressing the final end, the means is absolutized as an end, and this leads the soul to seek its satiation by pursuing a moving target perpetually out of reach. By desiring the means for itself instead of for the sake of the genuinely desirable end to which the means is a means, we turn our desire away from genuine contact with reality to an infinitely deferred contact with reality in the form of a reality-resistant abstraction. Further, insofar as the means is absolutized, any putative ends must be relativized to the means and thus become, themselves, nothing more than another means among means, as we can see when Nietzsche suggests that truth is a “coin.”¹⁰⁷ Insofar

already in such contact, but we can defer our contact with reality *as* reality by refusing to engage with it on its own terms.

¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1992), 84. This comparison was suggested to me by friend, Rob Duffy. As Schindler argues, to relativize the claims of reason is to measure reason by an external (and thus irrational) criterion; once reason loses its orientation to the whole it will inevitably become a servant of “whatever works,” of *effective power*. When reason is instrumentalized, it thereby becomes enslaved to the pursuit of reality-resistant goods. See *Plato’s Critique*, 13-14. I develop this theme with respect to the *Phaedrus* in “The Liberation of Virtue in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Virtue in Plato and Aristotle: Proceedings of the Sixth Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Heritage of Western Greece*, eds. Jay Elliott and Ryan M. Brown (Sioux

as money simply *is* fungibility, it abstracts from all of the concrete features of any particular good purchased, and hence, by the absolutization of money as the object of desire, the soul loses contact with (any particular) reality. Because money is fungible, it can't, by itself, discern particular features of reality and is thus not a reliable guide thereunto.

6. Derivative finite goods like honor, fame, and reputation similarly resist being measured by the real when pursued as ends. When true to themselves, these derivative goods are really signs and indicators of true goods: one should be honored because one is, in fact, honorable, and one is honorable to the extent that one exhibits virtues; thus, one should recognize that though intermediary goods like honor are in fact good (for it *is* good that we recognize and respect the exhibition of virtue, just as it *is* good that we should have the means to secure what both body and soul need for their flourishing), the goodness of an intermediary good like honor is derivative from the character traits that warrant it, and so pursuit of those character traits themselves is the way by which the soul can be satiated. However, insofar as honor, fame, and reputation need not actually accord with having a character which warrants these responses, one could garner honor, fame, and reputation by the mere appearance of virtuous character without actually developing the features of soul which warrant honor and reputation. By pursuing the sign instead of the signified, we make our satiation dependent on the happenstance whims, opinions, and desires of others; thus, in the Platonic analysis, the tyrant and the demagogue find themselves compelled to sycophancy and oppression with the hope of using force and guile to cajole others into having the desired opinions and reactions.

City: Parnassos Press, forthcoming). See also Johnstone, "Plato on the Enslavement of Reason," with which I am in general agreement. Johnstone argues, contrary to the "Humean" view of reason's abdication to the passions (387), that reason's "desires are *reoriented*, not silenced or eclipsed, when it is enslaved" to the passions (382); reason, and other passions enslaved to a more governing passion, can only express their desires through the distortive lens of the governing passion (cf. 383, 385, 390).

Like the pursuit of wealth and power, the pursuit of honor, fame, and reputation becomes a perpetually endless task, especially since the means by which honor is secured may never penetrate beyond cultivating desirable outward behavior to actually changing the honor-giver's inner disposition. Likewise, honor is not a reliable guide to reality insofar as it can be extorted into honoring what is dishonorable (alternatively, public opinion can change even without a change in that of which it is opinion).

7. Pleasure's relation to reality, or failure to relate to reality, is akin to that of honor, except insofar as pleasure has no necessary reference to other people. Like honor, pleasure is a sign which by nature points to a signified, and it is the signified which is the genuine good with respect to which pleasure is derivative. Pleasure is by nature a kind of gratuitous gift that attends the genuine good that comes from direct contact with reality which nourishes our souls in some particular way. But just as with honor, we can lose sight of the fact that pleasure points beyond itself toward the genuine good and get arrested by the mere enjoyable experience of pleasure, thus becoming unscrupulous about the source from which pleasure is derived (hence Socrates can describe some pleasures as "unnatural," as at 250e-251a). By elevating the experience of pleasure above the concern for whether the source of pleasure is genuinely good, we can be led away from contact with reality, with all of the consequences discussed in section 3.2 above, not least of which is the perpetual failure to satisfy the soul which leads, like the other goods discussed above, to a continual pursuit of a satiation always one step ahead. And, like the derivative goods discussed above, pleasure is not a reliable guide to reality insofar as the soul can, by training, habituation, or even on account of bodily defect, take pleasure indiscriminately in just about anything (people can take pleasure in contraries based on their dispositions, and people can take pleasure in their own dissolution when they have become corrupted).

8. Because these intermediary goods lack an inherent measure insofar as they cannot by themselves bring the soul into direct contact with reality, each leads—inexorably, when absolutized as *the* good—to a continual desire for more, consistent with their lack of an internal measure of satiation. The general tendency of this perpetually dissatisfied pursuit of satisfaction, in the Platonic analysis, shows itself as a need to master other things in order to gain more power, for the sake of whichever of these goods has taken charge of the soul. But insofar as mastery becomes the real driving force, all of these intermediary goods, when absolutized, tend to be convertible with the desire for *effective power*, the capacity to reshape what's in front of us according to our *mere* desires. To the extent that I want whatever I happen to want, I will need to find the means by which I can obtain it, and to the extent that I want to keep on getting whatever I happen to want, I will need to continually be finding more and more means by which I can obtain what I want to obtain. As the desire becomes more totalizing, the necessity of having all available means becomes more and more central, to the point where eventually the desired object becomes a kind of distant memory, displaced by the perceived need for continually greater power so as to be able to secure for all time what is, in principle, insecure except at a particular time. This mode of desiring thus becomes pleonectic. If we are consistent in the absolutization of this mere desire for reality-resistant goods, inevitably our need will take on the form of a desire to master reality itself; that is, we will want to conform reality to our own projections and whims rather than conform ourselves to the way things (including ourselves) really are.

9. Such a desire to master reality itself, to pursue derivative goods without reference to any measure imposed by nature or being, is akin to a desire for *magic*, and the reality-resistant power of converting x into y without regard to x-ness and y-ness is a kind of *magical* transmutation. The only way to secure the desire at hand would be to have *total* power, to be

completely unruled, and to reject any *per natura* norms. This *pleonexia* would show itself to be a mode of desiring characterized by a certain “immunity to being” since it rejects all measure and limitation. By nature, then, the desires for measure-resistant, intermediary goods which tend toward *pleonexia* when absolutized are not and cannot be reliable guides to the way things are since they abscond from being at every turn. It is noteworthy that the tyrant loves reality-resistant goods *precisely because* they don’t circumscribe his lust for power by deferring contact with a reality that demands to be treated according to its internal norms.

10. Perhaps the best Platonic representation of this reality-resistant desire for total mastery can be found in Thrasymachus as he is portrayed in *Republic* I (and echoed by the description of the tyrant in *Republic* IX).¹⁰⁸ In Thrasymachus, we find an extreme example of the basic Platonic existential thesis that the way you *are* (your character) follows from and reflects your basic understanding of and way of inhabiting the world. Thrasymachus’s thesis— injustice is preferable to justice insofar as injustice affords me more gain—is reflected in his character. He engages in dialogue for the sake of gain by overpowering his interlocutors, depicted most clearly in his threat to give Socrates a “forced feeding” with the argument (345b).¹⁰⁹ As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that Thrasymachus thinks that we do what we do—or, at least, the strong, who are the wise, do what they do (cf. 348c-d)—for the

¹⁰⁸ Thrasymachus does briefly appear in the *Phaedrus* (267c-d) during Socrates’s recitation of the various rhetorical devices he later characterizes as the “prerequisites” (see 269a-c) to the art of rhetoric. Socrates describes him as exceptionally capable of playing with his auditors’ emotions, able to produce contrary affects in them in quick succession. Phaedrus suggests a comparison of Thrasymachus to Odysseus (261c).

¹⁰⁹ When Thrasymachus comes on the scene, Socrates describes him as a “wild beast” who had been being “restrained” by those near him, but having overpowered them, “flung himself at us as if to tear us to pieces” (336b). Thrasymachus demands that Socrates “pay a fine” in order to learn from Thrasymachus what justice is (337d). In addition to his desire to overpower and to gain money from this conversation, Socrates notes that Thrasymachus thought by giving his definition he “could win a good reputation” (338a). When initially refuted by Socrates, Thrasymachus declares that he will not be “overpower[ed] in the argument” (341b) and concedes any point contrary to his thesis “with resistance” (e.g., 342c, e).

sake of rapacious gain, disregarding any norms “built into” nature.¹¹⁰ Or rather, Thrasymachus doesn’t just disregard natural norms, but instead refuses to accept that there can even be something like a natural norm, for admitting a natural norm would impose a check on his desire for gain. Contrary to Socrates’s apparently childish naiveté,¹¹¹ shepherding is *not* for the sake of the sheep, but instead for the sake of the hungry shepherd; ruling is *not* for the sake of the ruled, but instead for the sake of the “hungry” ruler. One rules so that he can “get the better” (*pleonektei*) of not just those who are ruled, but of *everyone* (349c). Insofar as Thrasymachus is motivated by an absolutized desire for gain and “getting the better” over everyone, he is forced to refuse any natural norms, like those built into the various *technai*, and thus must ultimately try to overpower reality itself and conform it to his desires. In this way, Thrasymachus’s “political realism” reveals itself to be a misnomer, insofar as it is neither political nor real, as evident in the fact that the Thrasymachean ideal cannot accept any element of heteronomy, whether from the *polis* and its citizens or from reality itself.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Against Thrasymachus’s contention that the rulers rule for their own benefit, Socrates argues that all *technai*, considered in the “precise sense” (as per Thrasymachus’s demands that they not be imprecise in their speech, 340e-341b) are ordered to the benefit of their object, not to their own benefit or to the benefit of the artisan engaging in the *technai*. The *technai* draw us, ecstatically, toward the reality upon which it is to work; cf. Schindler, “Work as Contemplation: On the Platonic Notion of *Technē*,” *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2015). Shepherding, insofar as it is shepherding, is for the sake of the sheep, and medicine, insofar as it is medicine, is for the sake of the body; analogously, ruling, insofar as it is ruling, is for the sake of the ruled.

¹¹¹ At 343a, Thrasymachus declares that Socrates’s “wet-nurse” has neglected to wipe his “sniveling nose.”

¹¹² By contrast, Socrates—who tends to associate himself with the tame dog rather than the wild wolf (cf. *Sophist* 231a)—instead refuses to overpower Thrasymachus in argument. Because he respects his interlocutor’s capacity to think about these matters, and because he wants to remain always open to a greater understanding of the matter at hand, he relies on his interlocutor’s contributions to their discussion and only moves on with the interlocutor’s consent. Unlike Thrasymachus, who *identifies* himself with his claims because they are his, Socrates insists on a firm distinction between his perception of things and the way they really stand. Thrasymachus wants to conform truth to *mineness*, whereas Socrates wants to conform *mineness* to truth. Socrates, as Plato portrays him, isn’t motivated by love of gain or love of victory—indeed, he was famous for his refusal to charge, unlike the other sophists (on the deep-seated connection between money and sophistry, see Schindler, “Why Socrates Didn’t Charge,” 395). Rather, Socrates is motivated by a deep love of truth, and he orients himself around this love of truth, bearing witness to it in his actions. Of course, there’s a deep irony in Thrasymachus’s position: he

§4.2. Reality-Resistance in Love and Language

11. Though the *Republic* is exemplary in assessing resistance to reality when it comes to the derivative and intermediary goods we find ourselves pursuing, the *Phaedrus* more subtly considers resistance to reality as it shows up in the ways in which we find ourselves relating to love and to language, especially insofar as love and language relate to goods like power, wealth, honor, and pleasure. The *Phaedrus*'s prologue dramatically foregrounds the theme of reality-resistance by existentially situating it within Phaedrus's dual interest in love-matters and rhetorical skill, for Phaedrus is enamored by a prospect of love which promises love's benefits without reference to love's norms (cf. 227c, 230e-231a) and by a prospect of language which promises the capacity to persuade one's auditors to cleave to clever and counter-intuitive ideas rather than to what is true and beneficial (cf. 227c-d, 245b-c). Note that this is not to say that either love or language is essentially reality-resistant; far from it.¹¹³ Socrates tries to redirect Phaedrus toward a right understand of and pursuit of both love and language by pointing to the necessity of "taking the longer road" (cf. 242e-243c, 260e-261a, 271d-272e) and *re*-connecting each to truth and reality, just as he had argued in the *Republic* for the necessity of taking the longer road to reconnect justice to knowledge of the Good, the source of truth and reality. As I'll argue later on (particularly in Chs. 4 and 6), love and language are, when rightly ordered, the human acts which most attune us to reality, by which we come into communion with reality and are thereby nourished. But both love and language can be oriented, contrary to their natures, toward unreality, and this is one of the key lessons we are to take from the anti-erotic speeches after their claims are illuminated by the Palinode.

claims that pursuing injustice and overpowering others is what makes one happy, but he himself is miserable despite doing just that; cf. McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 78.

¹¹³ Cf. Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 50.

12. When love becomes enslaved to pleasure (or to another good in the same class), it takes on pleasure's reality-resistant habitus. The mortally mad lover and the humanly moderate nonlover (who, we recall once again, is merely a humanly mad lover in disguise) each come to be "out of touch" with reality, as we discussed above. The mortally mad lover, in his enslavement to pleasure (238e), is driven to "reap the greatest possible pleasure for himself from the beloved" (238) and must tyrannically overwhelm and subdue his beloved so as to continue to reap that pleasure from him, for anything that resists the lover's pleasure-lust is "hateful" (239a) insofar as it poses a check on the lover's capacity to gratify his desire. But what resists the lover's lust is precisely the real (more specifically, that by which the beloved becomes fully himself, i.e., that by which the beloved becomes more "real"). Any genuine good that would come to the beloved—whether property, family, friends, or, worst of all, philosophy (239b)—must be seen by the monomaniacal lover as a hindrance, and so the lover must say, as a kind of inverse corollary to Milton's Satan's pronouncement, "good, be thou my evil." The nonlover's "friendship" is equally marked by a resistance to reality, for the nonlover promises love's gain without needing to abide by love's norms (227c, 230e-231a)¹¹⁴ and persuades the beloved by mistaking (or slandering) love's identity (cf. 242e, 243c). In his attempt to secure not just "immediate pleasure" but also "future benefits" (233c), the nonlover tries to undercut all of the contingency that comes along with interpersonal love, and in this way, his pursuit of his own satiation shows itself as a subtler version of the one who pursues and hoards power and money in order to fend off all possible dangers and insecurities.

¹¹⁴ For this reason, Ferrari suggests that the nonlover's seduction speech would, if successful, make the beloved into a prostitute (*Listening to the Cicadas*, 92). As Gordon has shown in her discussion of the uses of *proagein* in the prologue (*Plato's Erotic World*, 166-174), Plato subtly prepares us for this insight by utilizing terminology which, on the surface, has an innocent, straightforward meaning (to lead someone forward), but which also has saucier connotations (*proagein* is also to pimp, pander, procure a sexual object for another, etc.). Likewise, the prologue prepares us to see in Lysias's ghostwriterly profession something analogous to prostitution (cf. Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 19ff.).

13. When language loses its ordering to the manifestation of truth by becoming a means to derivative intermediary goods like wealth, power, and honor, it takes on their reality-resistant tendencies as well. This tendency is most evident in the sophistic-rhetorical deployment of language to manipulate appearances (cf. 261d-262c) for the sake of persuasion (itself for the sake of gain), but it is also a possibility in other uses of language not ordinarily considered rhetorical.¹¹⁵ We will consider how rhetorical language-use can become reality-resistant by considering how this tendency shows up in its aims and means; following this, we will see how resistance to reality can show up in writing.¹¹⁶

14. When rhetoric orders language to persuasion without regard to truth, it reduces language to a mere means by which the rhetorician's designs can be executed. When rhetoric is not beholden to truth (when it ignores truth, when it instrumentalizes truth), the rhetorical deployment of language reduces language to *effective power*. The fact that Phaedrus values rhetorical prowess more than "piles of gold" (228a) is indicative, for rhetoric, like money, allows the wielder to abstract from the specifics of the reality at hand in order to make them more manipulable. Just as money allows one to convert carrots into apples, so rhetoric allows one to convert donkeys into horses (cf. 260b-c), a linguistic act of magical transmutation, as discussed above.¹¹⁷ Just as prices can be deployed in order to transform, redirect, or introduce desire, so rhetoric can make a given course of action seem choice-worthy or not (268a-c; cf. *Gorgias* 456aff.), and in doing so rhetoric grants the rhetorician not just honor, reputation, and

¹¹⁵ Contrary to the prevailing Greek understanding, Socrates generalizes rhetoric to include not just public and serious concerns but also private and trivial concerns (cf. 261a-b). On account of this generalization, there is a meaningful way in which we can say all language-uses are or can be occasions for rhetoric, even if we can't, on that basis alone, reduce all language-use to rhetoric. Given the two uses of *psuchagōgia* in the *Phaedrus* (261a, 271d), it seems more reasonable to say that rhetoric gets its potentially universal scope from the natural capacity of words than to say that all language is just rhetoric.

¹¹⁶ We will consider the positive side of language, particularly writing, in Ch. 6.

¹¹⁷ On the implications of this point, see Schindler, "Why Socrates Didn't Charge," 403.

fame (see e.g., 235d, 236b), but also wealth and great political power (see 268a), sufficient even to persuade the *polis* that what's evil is in fact good (cf. 260c-d). Rhetoric can accomplish such goals by leading the auditor incrementally from the true to the false by means of similarities (see 261d-262c, 267a-b) and by cultivating and directing the auditor's emotions (see 267c-d).

15. Rhetoric effects persuasion successfully by reconfiguring language and argument so as to be measured by plausibility (the *eikos logos*) rather than truth, thereby making the apparent suffice in place of the real (cf. 259e-260a, 272c-e; *sed contra*, 260e, 270a-271a). By making plausibility the measure rather than reality, reality-resistant rhetoric greatly expands its domain of influence until ultimately it makes a claim to speaking plausibly about *all* things, regardless of their actual way of being.¹¹⁸ Reality-resistant rhetoric's power comes from its capacity to make plausible arguments for the fundamental instrumentality (or conventionality) of all things. By ignoring truth, rhetoric can teach how such things can be *used* and *deployed* according to one's (happenstance) desires without concerning itself for the thing's nature and any *per natura* norms "written into" the thing in question (see 268a-269c). And insofar as one can ignore any *per natura* norms, one will find herself with a significantly improved (quantitatively speaking), quasi-magical capacity to do whatever strikes her as desirable. Because the augmentation of power is (or at least appears to be) desirable, rhetoric cleaves to plausibility and "bid[s] the truth a hearty farewell" (272e) for the sake of greater persuasive power (even though, as Socrates argues, persuasion is in fact tied to a recognition of truth, and

¹¹⁸ See *Gorgias* 447c. There is thus a similarity between the rhetorician's claim to omniscience and the rationalist demythologizer's claim to being able to give plausible accounts for all of the oddities (*atopia*) recorded in myth (see 229c-230a), and it is worth highlighting the fact that the demythologizer gives a *plausible* account, not a necessary account. A similar claim would be made by the would-be artisan who mistakes the "prerequisites" of *technē* for the *technē* itself (cf. 268a-269c), like a would-be "doctor" who thinks medicine is just the capacity to know how to make people vomit without reference to any norms by which one could assess when vomiting would be *good*. When *technē* is reduced to technique without reference to the truth and goodness of the object of *technē*, we see another place in which something that *per natura* is ordered to reality becomes reality-resistant.

so even if one's goal is greater persuasive capacity, one would only achieve it by a prior investigation of the truth; cf. 260e, 262a-b, 277b-c). The source of normativity is relocated from the thing at hand to the user's will, and thereby morality is relocated from the public to the private sphere.

16. To the extent that morality is a matter of private will and not in some way ontological (alternatively, to the extent that morality is based on *nomos* to the exclusion of *phusis*), the user is given a license to ignore reality's claims to whatever extent his conscience happens to allow. Because normativity and desirability are no longer "objective," such a rhetorical outlook on language's relation to being and truth reveals itself to be quite ready to devolve into the use of force and guile in order to carry out the rhetorician's designs, as already indicated by Thrasymachus's threat to give Socrates a "forced feeding." Phaedrus, who is beguiled by the promise of rhetorical prowess, tries to hide Lysias's speech from Socrates (228c-e) so that he might practice the Lysianic incantation on an unsuspecting victim (228b, 228e), and when Socrates becomes wise to this ploy, he worries that Phaedrus will resort to force (228c) in order to carry through his designs. After being tempted by the prospect of hearing another rhetorical speech to add to his repertoire, Phaedrus does indeed threaten Socrates by force, reminding Socrates that Phaedrus is the stronger and younger, and so Socrates should "take [his] meaning" (236d, recalled at 242a). By rejecting truth as normative and necessary for the successful use of language, persuasion devolves into coercion, and thus the reality-resistant rhetorician shows himself to be like the humanly mad lover.

17. Perhaps most strikingly, *writing* is treated by the *Phaedrus* not as just one innocent mode of language-use among others but instead as having a dramatically reality-resistant tendency, comparatively greater than that in speech. By the time writing becomes a thematic

topic of discussion in the dialogue (starting with the myth of Theuth and Thamus at 274c), it has already taken on some less than savory resonance. Lysias’s speech is, of course, a written speech; Phaedrus tried to hide this speech under his cloak (228d) so that he could try to entrance Socrates with its content (recall that Socrates calls the written speech a “drug (*pharmakon*) to entice me into walking outside the city,” by which Phaedrus could lead Socrates (*agousin, periaxein*) all around Attica just as an animal is led around by a dangled carrot; 229d-e).¹¹⁹ When Phaedrus’s designs are exposed, Lysias is summoned into presence (228e) and subsequently continues to hang around like a ghost tethered to his phylactery.¹²⁰ When Phaedrus worries that Socrates has out-performed Lysias in his Palinode, he alludes to the fact that Lysias has been censured as a “speechwriter” (*logographos*, 257c), a term which often carries the dishonorable connotation of “ghostwriter,” one who writes speeches for others for money.¹²¹ Further, Phaedrus is worried that Lysias and other speech-writers will be labeled as sophists who are, as the Platonic dialogue named for them goes to great pains to show, reality-

¹¹⁹ Socrates’s reference to Lysias’s written speech as a newly-discovered drug (*pharmakon*) is echoed in the myth of the invention of writing at 274e, and so the two scenes show themselves to be parallel moments of a chiasm in the structure of the dialogue.

¹²⁰ Despite being somewhat arcane, the term “phylactery” is particularly suitable as a term for a piece of writing in the context of the *Phaedrus* on account of the various senses it has racked up over time, which capture the ambivalence toward writing expressed—using other loaded, polysemous terms like *psuchagōgia* and *pharmakon*—in the *Phaedrus*. Originally, a *phylaktērion* is a protective object (from *phylattein*, to guard or protect), like an amulet or charm used to ward off evil spirits; in the ancient Judaic tradition, *phylaktēria* were protective boxes designed to house sacred texts; in contemporary fantasy writing, the phylactery is a protective device in which a particular sort of sentient undead creature (a “lich”) stores its essence for safe-keeping in order to ensure immortality (effectively the same as the “horcrux” of *Harry Potter*), much as politically-minded speech-writers might try to live on in glory after death through their written speeches and the fame-kindling writings of others. To the extent that the written speech is contrasted with the “speech living and ensouled, the written version of which would justly be called the image” (276a), we could understand a written speech as a kind of *corpse* of *logos* to the extent that it forgets its innate *iconicity* (see Ch. 6), in which case, Lysias’s soul will be “evoked from the dead” (*psuchagōgia*) each time Phaedrus reads from the speech. Plato is, I think, inviting us to hear these connotations in his deployment of rich, polysemous terms like *psuchagōgia* and *pharmakon*, as we’ll go on to discuss.

¹²¹ As a metic (a resident alien), Lysias is not permitted to address the assembly publically, and so he cannot write speeches for his own political gain. He can, however, get paid to write speeches for others to deliver publically.

resisters *par excellence*. But, Socrates counters, such politically-oriented speech-writers do not actually refrain from writing out of fear of being labeled sophists;¹²² instead, they exhibit a certain degree of fawning insofar as they each begin their speeches by recording the list of those whose approbation they've garnered (257e-258a). Subsequently, they wonder (*tethaumakotes*, 258b) at this speech-writing capacity by which they have become equal to gods (*isotheton*, 258c) and at the reputation they've acquired through their proficiency with oratory and speech-writing. Thus, before the thematic discussion of writing near the end of the dialogue, writing has already come across as a hubristic way of securing money, honor, and power, which imbues the writer with a degree of "immortality" (258c) and godhood, and to the extent that writing is ordered to these reality-resistant goods, it would seem to have given itself over to reality resistant tendencies from the beginning. We should note the absence of any reference to reality or truth in the pre-thematized occurrences of writing in the dialogue; it would seem that these speech-writers have accomplished what they have accomplished by means of playing to public opinion (see 257e).¹²³

18. The reality-resistant tendency of writing is only further problematized when we finally come to the myth of the invention of writing (274c-275b) and the subsequent discussion thereof, which brings us right into the dialogue's concluding lines. Theuth (Hermes) boasts

¹²² Phaedrus supposes that Lysias might refrain from writing a speech to place in competition with the Palinode "for love and honor" (258c).

¹²³ This is not to say that those mentioned by Socrates (Lycurgus, Solon, and Darius) were themselves mere sycophants who had no grasp of truth and who accomplished what they accomplished for their own benefit as opposed to the benefit of those for whom they gave laws. Indeed, the three were considered in ancient times to be great reformers. Given Socrates's immediate qualification—"Then this much is clear to all: writing speeches, at least, is not in itself shameful" (258c-d)—it would be better to interpret these remarks as a dialectical beginning, taking Phaedrus's inclinations and opinions as starting points which problematize the issue. Insofar as we have yet to get to an answer to the thematic question for the post-Palinodic part of the *Phaedrus*—"how one is able to speak and write beautifully" (259e; cf. 258d, 274b)—we do not as yet have criteria for assessing these speech-writers. As the dialogue progresses, apprehension of truth will become criterial for that assessment.

that writing and letters “will make the Egyptians wiser (*sophōterous*) and will improve their memory (*mnēmōnikōterous*),” for writing is the “drug (*pharmakon*) for memory (*mnēmēs*) and wisdom (*sophias*)” (274e). By contrast, Thamus (Zeus) critiques Theuth’s discovery, claiming that writing “will produce a forgetting in the souls of those who learn these letters as they fail to exercise their memory,” effectively outsourcing their memory to external “foreign signs” (275a). Rather than being an aid to memory, writing will be an aid to reminding, and by teaching writing, Theuth offers “an apparent, not a true wisdom” (275a), a condition which will lead to hubris insofar as the student of letters will think she knows much but will actually be devoid of knowledge (275a-b).¹²⁴

19. By conflating external catalogues of symbolic reminders with true wisdom, one will deceive oneself (and presumably others). It is not hard to imagine the trajectory of this intellectual outsourcing—having been divorced from their *of which*, written reminders cease to retain their intentional, symbolic function and thus take on the form of realities over-and-against the realities which they formerly had intended.¹²⁵ But insofar as having a catalogue of such external symbolic reminders allows one to grapple with more things at once—allows one to “clear up” some intellectual “processing power” by suppressing the necessity of continually being transported from reminder to that of which the reminder is a reminder, thereby denying the necessity of “taking the longer road around” and making the “ascent”—such written

¹²⁴ Socrates adds further criticisms on top of Thamus’s, but they are not pertinent to the task at hand. We’ll consider the criticisms in greater depth in Ch. 6.

¹²⁵ In *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), Klein argues that modern algebra is a product of precisely such a suppression of the intentional character of the Greek concept of number (for, as Klein argues, numbers were originally always thought of as being *of* particular units). Klein’s contention about the modern collapse of the *ordo intentionalis* of numbers parallels the *Phaedrus*’s worry about writing: in both cases, there’s a collapse of the distinction between an original (the numbered units, the reality under discussion), that which directly refers to the original (the number, speech), and that which refers to the original at a second remove (relations of numbers, writing).

reminders will transform into *means* by which I can accomplish what I seek to accomplish rather than retain their status as iconic windows *through* which I can come into contact with the realities intended. Hence, external written reminders will become akin to coins, transferable in the “marketplace of ideas,” promising readers wisdom without being able to deliver anything more insofar as they suppress their intentionality.

20. Thus, one might become inclined to “store up” as many of these written ideas as possible, thinking that sheer breadth and quantity can satisfactorily substitute for the genuine contact with reality which knowledge (*nous*) simply *is* (as Parmenides fr. B3 suggests). Such a store-house of ideas can then be used as means to accomplish the tasks set before us with ever greater efficiency since we can move from one written symbol to the next without needing to continually “reactivate” the prior ideas.¹²⁶ There is a good reason why we often think of knowledge as a form of *power*, and the capacity to outsource memory to written symbols such that knowledge is objectified only further converts knowledge into a form of power. Insofar as the intentionality of the written symbols is suppressed in favor of efficiency and efficacy, knowledge is untethered from its connatural connection to reality, becoming one means among many in the arsenal of power, to be directed wherever the knowing subject so happens to desire. Writing is perhaps the *most* dangerous of human acts to the extent that the most

¹²⁶ As we see in the fourth of Descartes’s *Meditations*, this is a crucial requirement for the progress of the sciences, which, in Descartes’s understanding, are the means by which we will gain power such that we live commodious lives, becoming “masters and possessors of nature” (*Discourse*, VI). On the other hand, that “progress” can also lead “normal science” (*per* Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) to forget its origins and the originary experiences and insights by which a given science is intelligible in the first place (on which, see Husserl’s “Origin of Geometry,” appended to *The Crisis of the European Sciences*).

direct, intimate, and complete contact with reality we have—knowledge—is commodified by it into a vehicle for power and thereby reshaped to have power’s reality-resistant tendency.¹²⁷

21. Finally, our concern with reality-resistance can be generalized in two ways. First, there is a sense in which *all* goods (and thereby all beings), to the extent that they are not the Good, can be pursued in a reality-resistant way insofar as a finite, derivative good is absolutized so as to displace the centrality of the Good from which all goods derive their goodness (hence the reference to “excess” in our desires at 238a-b). To the extent that *all* of that which we experience is by nature an *appearance* of the true beings and really real reality (*ta ontōs onta, ousia ontōs ousa*), as we will discuss in Ch. 6, all of that which we experience can become reality-resistant to the extent that we forget or suppress the derivative, apparitional character (what we might call the “iconicity”) of the things in our experience, even if, by nature, such experiential things do not have a stilted connection to reality. Second, we can now appreciate one of the fundamental theses of the *Phaedrus*: the way we (understand) love and the way we (understand) language is reflective of and a corollary to the way we understand and inhabit reality itself. If we love and use language in a reality-resistant mode on account of ordering love and language to reality-resistant goods, we reveal our understanding of reality as something like the sheer interplay of indifferent power as expressed in pre-philosophical paganism, against which Plato argues.

22. If the two motive forces of the soul are bound to seek reality-resistant goods, and if the soul is bound to love and to use language in a way that is ordered to such reality-resistant goods, then the soul will find itself living in a world characterized by such an interplay of

¹²⁷ If so, Plato raises an important question about the status of his own writing, since the critique of writing paradoxically seems to be self-reflexive insofar as it is itself a written thing. We’ll address this issue and discuss Plato’s own writing practice at the end of Ch. 6.

indifferent powers. Accordingly, the soul will remain in a perpetual civil war, wherein each motive force seeks to become hegemonic, and wherein the “peace” that comes from the concord of the two motive forces reveals itself to be a lie. Socrates’s concluding prayer to Pan for moderation, wherein he dares to hope that his “worldly belongings be in accord with [his] inner self” and to hope that he will have “only as much gold as a moderate man can carry and use” (279b-c), and thus dares to adopt for himself a really real measure irreducible to happenstance desire, would thus reveal itself to be, as Thrasymachus might say, “high-minded innocence” (*Republic* 348c-d), that is, as a kind of self-righteous naiveté, unless there should be some way to have a genuine contact—a communion—with reality. Over the next few chapters, we will develop an argument for how such a communion is possible.

§5. Nourishing Reason—A Genuine Communion?

1. Neither desire for pleasure nor mortal moderation can lead the soul into genuine communion when acting alone. Nor can they do so together; though they might agree on occasion (cf. 237e), the arguments above indicate that they take contradictory approaches toward the beloved when there is nothing to harmonize their actions. Only reason can harmonize these two forms in the soul by “reining” them in and subordinating them to its own goal. Mortal moderation, a friend of true opinion, and something accustomed to being “with reason” (*logōi*), is, as said above, obedient and willing to following the charioteer by word and command alone. Desire for pleasure, on the other hand, is prone to excess, hubris, and irrationality (*aneu logou, alogōs*), but can be trained through repeated redirection and restraint (experienced by the black horse as violence, but not so by the white horse).

2. But can reason alone lead the soul into communion? And further, by subordinating desire for pleasure and mortal moderation to itself, is reason thereby acting “selfishly,” simply

squashing inconvenient competitors? The answer to both of these questions must be a resounding *no*. Though reason's fulfillment is distinct from that of the two motive forces—reason is fulfilled by its vision of the “things which really are” beyond the heavens, upon which it “feasts” (246b, 247c-d, 248b-c), whereas the horses are brought back to a heavenly manger to feed on nectar and drink ambrosia (247e)—reason is responsible for directing the whole soul toward fulfillment and does not concern itself *simply* with its own fulfillment. Reason's activity with respect to the other aspects of the soul is a microcosmic analogue to how all soul (246b)—especially that of Zeus, the great leader (*megas hēgemōn*; 246e)—acts with relation to all that is soulless: it takes the lead, “arranging everything thoroughly and *taking care* (*epimeloumenos*) of it” (246e; emphasis added), even if, for the charioteer, sometimes “taking care” requires disciplining a horse for its own good, so that it can actually achieve its own fulfillment appropriately. But whereas Zeus takes the lead by going first (*prōtos poreuetai*, 246e) and being followed (*hepetai*) by an entourage of gods and *daimonia*, intellect takes the lead “within” the soul, paradoxically, by *being led* by a reality “outside” the soul, following which it directs the motive forces within the soul to draw it forward. It reins in (*hēniōchēsis*) the horses and directs them even as it is moved by them, and so, it would seem, *something about their motive force is necessary for reason to accomplish its own nourishment and proper activity*, even though the activities of the motive force are not *part of* reason's own proper activity and nourishment (the charioteer raises his head to look outside the heavens; 248a).¹²⁸ But reason's own activity, as distinguished from the activities of the two motive forces and the necessary harmonization thereof, is precisely to *follow* (*hepasthai*) the divine entourage into communion with true being (*ta ontōs*

¹²⁸ The fact that *something* about these motive forces is necessary for the intellectual activity of the charioteer is further suggested by the fact that even the gods are likened to charioteers being pulled by a team of horses.

onta), visible to it alone, and the source of true knowledge (247c). Reason, as we see, can bring the whole soul into communion by its capacity to co-act with something prior to it.

3. Socrates's two speeches on love thus point to and problematize two different aspects of the soul's ordering: its internal ordering to reason and its external ordering to the true beings. The anti-erotic speech highlights the question of internal (dis)order by attending to the civil war between the two motive forces who vie for control and lead one into sound-mindedness or manic love. The Palinode resolves the question of internal ordering by introducing reason, in the guise of a charioteer reining in his two motion-bearing horses, which can resolve the soul's internal disputes and lead the soul into a unified direction. Beyond this, the Palinode then points to the necessity of considering that to which this newly unified soul is, or should be, directed and reveals "the true nature of things" (247c) and "the place of Being, the Being that truly is (*ousia ontōs ousa*)" as that alone which nourishes us and fulfills our longing (247d). To highlight this change in consideration from the internal ordering to the external ordering, Plato redeploys the semantic network of leading (*agein*) and following (*hepasthai*) to which we have been attending. If, in the anti-erotic speech, leading and following had to do with what in the soul was taking control (regardless of where the whole soul was moving), in the Palinode, leading and following have to do with the journey of the whole soul toward the superheavenly place as the soul follows the gods where they lead. The emphasis, then, shifts toward a consideration of what is required for us to follow the gods who lead the divine procession to the place where rationality can be nourished and fulfilled, true being. We must turn, then, to a consideration of what the gods are doing while leading and how we can follow and what we must do in order to follow well. If we step back from the mythical depiction of this event, we can rephrase the investigation as follows: what must be true of being and its

activity, and what must be true of human nature and human activity, in order for human beings to come into a genuine communion with “really real reality.”

Ch. 3: Can All Be Saved? Essential and Inessential Distinctions Among Soul-Types

§1. Noble and Ignoble Lies: Is There a “Natural Order of Rank Among Men”?

1. In the hermeneutical prologue to his interpretation of the *Republic* in *The City and Man*, Leo Strauss claims: “It would not be strange if Socrates had tried to lead those who are able to think toward the truth and to lead the others toward agreement in salutary opinions or to confirm them in such opinions.”¹ After all, we are told, Socrates “did not approach all men in the same manner,” for he approached those who possessed “good natures”—those who are “quick to learn, have a good memory and are desirous for all worthwhile subjects of learning”—with eagerness, willing to work through the dispute step by step, but when confronted with those who “merely listened, he proceeded through generally accepted opinions and thus produced agreement to an extraordinary degree.”² Socrates endeavored to lead those who were ready and able *to think* to the true, but when confronted by the unthinking everyman, who likes neither to be challenged nor to work through difficulties, Socrates practiced that “noble dissimulation” called “irony,” the art of “safe speech,” which Homer had attributed to wily Odysseus.³ According to Strauss, irony is the way by which the superior can avoid coming into conflict with the inferior elements of society. If, as Strauss contends, “irony is essentially related to the fact that there is a natural order of rank among men, it follows that irony consists in speaking differently to different kinds of people.”⁴

¹ Strauss, *The City and Man*, 53-54.

² *Ibid.*, 53.

³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴ *Ibid.* In a footnote to this claim, Strauss refers, strangely, to *Rival Lovers* 133d-e and 134c. In this short dialogue, Socrates comes into discussion with two *erastai* vying for the attention of two youths. One *erastēs* is described as an athletic man and a lover of gymnastic, who thinks that philosophy is nothing but babble (132b-c), whereas the other describes himself as devoted to philosophy and a life of learning (133c). Christopher Bruell describes the latter as “a culture vulture” (“On the *Lovers*,” *The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press [1987], 93; references to the *Rival Lovers* come from the translation of James Leake in the same volume). At both of

2. On Strauss's read, Plato internalized and adopted his master's dual stance; further, he adapted his writing to reflect that dual stance. Strauss infers from the critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* (to which we will turn in Ch. 6) that Plato wrote dialogues because, in that literary genre, Plato was able to perfect the art of writing so that it accomplished "the proper work of a writing," namely, "to talk to some readers and to be silent to others."⁵ As the critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* shows, "writings are essentially defective [1] because they are equally accessible to all who can read [2] or because they do not know to whom to talk and to whom to be silent [3] or because they say the same things to everyone."⁶ Recognizing the defects that plague written composition, Plato discerned a manner of writing that was able "to say different things to different people," which is to say, Plato discovered an art of writing that is "radically ironical."⁷ By utilizing hermeneutically opaque features like narration, drama, irony, misrememberings, intentional mistakes, differences in the character of Socrates's interlocutors, myth, etc., Plato was able to craft a writing which could "reveal the truth to some while leading others to salutary opinions,"⁸ by rewarding the diligent reader with truth for thinking through the very inconsistencies, contradictions, and tensions which thwart the ignorant precisely by

the moments to which Strauss refers, the unnamed intellectualist rival says to Socrates that he would answer the question at hand in one way if he were talking to the athletic rival and in another way if he were talking to Socrates. Socrates describes the intellectual as speaking "very ironically [...] in a double fashion" (*mala eirōnikōs eipe duo*; 133d). The intellectual's approach to conversation with the athlete is disputatious, and he goes so far as to say that he would say something other than what he thinks is true to the athlete, whereas he would say what he thought to be correct to Socrates. The intellectual, then, seems to be doing *exactly* the kind of thing which Strauss is discussing. However, the rest of the dialogue makes it emphatically clear that the "intellectual" is not a philosopher at all, for he doesn't actually understand what philosophy is and is drawn into contradictions about philosophy (cf. 139a). It is thus remarkably strange that Strauss alludes to the *Rival Lovers* as evidence for his claims about Socratic (and Platonic) irony, given that the ironist in the *Rival Lovers* turns out to be a fool. One might say that Strauss missed the point of the dialogue entirely. In a similar vein, James Rhodes suggests that Plato himself is familiar with the Straussian understanding of irony but dismisses it as vicious; see *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence: Plato's Erotic Dialogues* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 110-112.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

being *invisible* to the ignorant. Accordingly, for Strauss, Plato's great intellectual achievement is the *inscription* of Socratic irony, the mastery of a kind of written practical judgment, wherein the truth is revealed to those who are worthy and concealed from those who are not. Plato, like Socrates, knows, it would seem, that there is "a natural order of rank" among human beings; unlike Socrates, Plato's capacity to speak to the upper echelons did not die with him.

3. To be sure, there are significant differences between human beings, and some do take up philosophical thinking more easily than others—on account of some natural predispositions (like quick-wittedness and having capacious memory), on account of socialization and habituation (as in the case of children in whom wonder has been cultivated and the passions have been, to some extent, quieted), or both. But is there, factually, a "natural order of rank among men"? Or, minimally, do we have good reason to think, per Strauss, that *Plato* thought there was such a "natural" order of rank?

4. The idea that there are natural hierarchies within human nature, ineliminable by education or well-chosen policies, rankles modern, liberal sensibilities, which presuppose human equality as a self-evident truth. Rightfully so, despite modern liberals' disagreements about how to ground human equality and despite modernity's ignominious record on actually bearing witness to this self-evident truth. Curiously, modern interpreters of Plato have put him on both sides of the natural hierarchy debate, casting him alternatively as the great enemy or as the great revealer of the truth of human things.⁹

⁹ It should be noted that I refer to the figures to whom I am about to refer because they each put the point bluntly and exercise a considerable influence on Platonic studies and/or the popular reception of Plato, not because I take them to be particularly good Plato scholars. As I go on to discuss in this chapter, each of the positions I'm about to discuss "gets it wrong" in one way or another, but each of these misreadings is persistent.

5. As we just noted, Strauss sees an illiberal Plato; but beyond this, Strauss seems to endorse Plato's putative illiberalism as revealing an irrefragable truth of the human condition, for he seems to think that the "antagonism" between philosophy and society (that is, the antagonism between the life lived in pursuit of universal knowledge and the life lived in conformity with popular opinion) is politically basic. By pursuing its goal "to replace opinion about 'all things' by knowledge of 'all things,'" philosophy threatens to dissolve the foundations of society, for "opinion is the element of society [...] the element in which society breathes."¹⁰ But because philosophy must "remain the preserve of a small minority," philosophers "must respect the opinions on which society rests," even to the point of structuring their writings so as to confirm, at the surface (or "exoteric") level, society's foundational opinions, even as they work, at the depth (or "esoteric") level to lead fellow philosophical natures to the truth that would threaten to dissolve society's foundational myth.¹¹

6. Gilles Deleuze, by contrast, censures Plato's putative illiberalism as an implication of a basic "will to select, to sort out." Such a discriminatory will is to be understood not, as the later Platonic tradition contends, as a desire to categorize things by genus and species, but instead as a desire to distinguish "the pure from the impure."¹² The Platonic texts are,

¹⁰ Strauss, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 221.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 221-222. In *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), Strauss wonders "whether morality does not have two entirely different roots," one true, and one merely salutary (151). See Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 72-95, for a discussion of Strauss's esotericism and the philosophical anthropology it presupposes. According to Rhodes, Strauss is a (closeted?) Nietzschean. S. B. Drury concurs; see "The Esoteric Philosophy of Leo Strauss," *Political Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1985). Stanley Rosen makes a similar set of claims, albeit more sympathetically, in "Straussian Hermeneutics," *Essays in Philosophy: Ancient*.

¹² Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum," trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October*, Vol. 27 (1983), 45, 46. Presumably, Deleuze reads Plato in light of Nietzsche's discussion of the "priestly inversion" in *Genealogy of Morality*, Essay 1.

accordingly, marked by a persistent desire to elevate the true-born, the “iconic” image which “measures up” to its source, and distinguish the true born from the false-born, especially the “simulacrum,” which subverts the very logic of the relationship between model and copy, paradigm and image.¹³ For Deleuze, the “Platonist” discrimination between true image and false copy is the backbone of Western culture and thought:

“Philosophy continues to pursue the same goal, Iconology, adapting it to the speculative demands of Christianity (the infinitely small and the infinitely large). And always there is the selection from among claimants, the exclusion of the eccentric and divergent, and this in the name of a superior finality, an essential reality, or even a meaning to history.”¹⁴

The “overthrow of Platonism,” which Deleuze, following Nietzsche, hopes to accomplish by absolutizing difference (“Difference as a primary power”),¹⁵ will exclude nothing as impure except that which presupposes the hierarchy of pure and impure in the first place.¹⁶ Despite coming from a significantly different starting point, Sir Karl Popper will likewise indict Plato for his “totalitarianism” on account of his willingness to exclude the eccentric and deficient in the name of the ideal.¹⁷

7. On the other hand—regardless of the dispute between Strauss and Deleuze (alongside Popper) about the *merits* of Plato’s illiberalism—others see Plato as essentially a proto-Enlightenment, *liberal* figure, for whom any distinctions within the human lot are relativized by the power of education and political technique. Recently, Louis Markos argued

¹³ We will discuss the ontology of images and how images are distinct from copies in Ch. 6.

¹⁴ Deleuze, “Plato and the Simulacrum,” 51.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45, 53; cf. 48.

¹⁶ See. *ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Notably, in her Bradley Lecture of 1997, Nussbaum asserts that Popper is right to attack Plato for being antiliberal and undemocratic, despite agreeing with Popper’s detractors that he “saw nothing deep in Plato’s arguments” (“Plato’s *Republic*: The Good Society and the Deformation of Desire” [Library of Congress, 1998], 12). Nussbaum continues: “So Popper is right: Plato is our enemy, and Plato is to be feared;” nevertheless, unlike Popper, who thinks we should consign Plato to the dustbin of opprobrious history, Nussbaum thinks he is worth studying as a kind of “mirror” whereby democracy is “challenged to know, and to justify, itself,” for Plato “poses the strongest challenge to democratic freedom that any philosopher ever has” (*ibid.*, 12-13).

in *The Imaginative Conservative* that by rejecting the notion of original sin in favor of an account of evil located in ignorance, Plato's thought (like Rousseau's two millennia later) leads to totalitarianism, just as Popper claims. However, whereas Deleuze condemns Plato for imposing the categorical distinctions of purity and impurity, whereby hierarchies can be postulated on the basis of intrinsic differences within souls (as his reading of the *Phaedrus* myth implies),¹⁸ this Rousseauian read of Plato places whatever hierarchies there are in contingent social features (namely, lack of education) rather than in intrinsic differences among souls (cf. *Republic* 518b-d). The totalitarian state posits that "evil lies outside the individual [as, for example, in a social class], rather than within,"¹⁹ and uses this as a basis for purging the elements of society it considers to be unsavory. On this read, corruption comes from society, not from an internal state of rebellion against one's source, as per Rousseau; but, for our purposes here, this implies that any "order of rank among men" that exists is precisely *not* natural, but instead a social construction. Plato's "liberalism" about human equality (presumably understood by Markos in terms of the Christian articulation of what we'd now call "human dignity," which precedes the Enlightenment liberal formulation) is not what's at issue; rather, what's at issue is Plato's utopian vision, which fails to recognize the destructive tendency built within *all* human beings.

8. Similarly, Martha Nussbaum's interpretation of Plato in *The Fragility of Goodness* sees him as a proto-Enlightenment rationalist, whose liberalism about distinctions within humanity is, again, not under question; rather, Nussbaum sees Plato as a forerunner to the technocratic impulse in the Enlightenment, which needs to be moderated by a healthy recognition of our

¹⁸ Deleuze refers to the *Phaedrus's* myth, specifically, as a means of distinguishing the true and false "claimants" to madness; see "Plato and the Simulacrum," 46.

¹⁹ Louis Markos, "Plato's Big Mistake," *The Imaginative Conservative* (2013; <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2013/10/platos-big-mistake-knowledge-is-virtue.html>).

contingency (“moral luck”). Nussbaum prefaces her interpretations of the Greeks specifically by saying that she does not aim “to reject Enlightenment ideas but to appropriate the Greeks as allies of an expanded version of Enlightenment liberalism.”²⁰ While Nussbaum frequently censures Plato for his rejection of the tragedians’ recognition of the role of chance and luck (*tuchè*) in his attempt to develop an art (*technè*) whereby the contingency which besets human life could be, to the extent possible, mitigated, she nowhere censures Plato for supposing a “natural order of rank among men.”²¹ On her read, Plato is concerned to develop in his “middle dialogues” a theory of value whereby all values could be reduced to a common measure and thereby become “subject to precise scientific control.”²² This theory is *not* “immediately available” to all, yet Plato supplies us models—the gods—to imitate to make up for our shortcomings.²³ Regardless of a particular person’s understanding (or lack thereof) of the theory, the *effects* thereof are applicable to all, for, in Nussbaum’s read, Socrates is searching for a moral *technè* whereby we can all be saved, regardless of rank (cf. *Protagoras* 356d-357a). In other words, though Nussbaum criticizes this Socratic “art” for its dehumanizing effects (by divorcing us from our embodiment, emotionality, and contingency), she concedes that this Socratic art is given as an anodyne for human beings simply, not just for the philosophical souls.

9. So, to sum up, Strauss takes Plato to be *revealing* (or, perhaps more accurately, recognizing) an important truth about human inequality, Deleuze takes Plato to be *imposing* a

²⁰ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, xvi.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 89-90, 99.

²² *Ibid.*, 110. Cf. 179-180, where Nussbaum’s misreads the *Symposium* as suggesting that Socrates’s “strong hidden assumption” is that “all beauty, *qua* beauty, is uniform, the same in kind.” (We might ask: If all beauty is uniform, how does it make sense to speak of *manifestations* of beauty?) In Nussbaum’s developmentalist read, the “early” *Protagoras* inaugurates the search for such a measure, proposing “pleasure” as a kind of “stand in,” which will be replaced by a more adequate measure in the *Republic* and *Symposium*.

²³ *Ibid.*, 157-158; cf. 155.

false claim about human inequality on account of a misbegotten hankering for purity, Markos is happy to concede that Plato thinks there are no natural distinctions among human beings but censures Plato for failing to recognize that original sin vitiates us all, and Nussbaum, likewise happy to concede a lack of natural distinctions, censures Plato for failing to recognize the role that luck, contingency, and the emotions play in the moral life. Two of the authors agree that, for Plato at least, there are ineliminable distinctions within humanity, despite their divergent evaluations of this claim, and the other two authors agree that, for Plato at least, whatever distinctions there are among human beings are relativized by the possibility that we can overcome human ignorance by education and a well-tuned ethical art. Which is it? Any interpretation of the *Phaedrus* (or, of Plato generally) will have to resolve this question, one way or another, since it lies at the heart of any prescriptive claims about the dialogues' ethical teachings.

10. This chapter, then, focuses on the *Phaedrus*'s resources for answering whether or not Plato thinks that there is a "natural order of rank among men" in any meaningful sense (in the *Phaedrus*, at least, for I here grant preliminarily, for the sake of argument, that the dialogues *could* present inconsistent theses on this question). It's important to work through this question because many readings of the dialogue, implicitly or explicitly, presuppose an answer to this question.

11. For example, Griswold, following Strauss, suggests that "the stratification of meanings in the dialogues is purposely designed by Plato" to achieve the goal of discriminating between philosophically-inclined and philosophically-disinclined readers.²⁴ Further, Griswold

²⁴ Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 221. Though Griswold agrees with Strauss that the Platonic dialogues discriminate audiences and present different meanings to different audience types (the fundamental function of irony), he grounds his account differently (on philosophical necessity rather than political prudence); cf. *ibid.*, 11-15 and, more generally, Griswold's "Irony in the Platonic Dialogues," *Philosophy*

claims that “Plato’s dialogues are medicinal in that they vary the treatment with the patient. The medicine is conservatively applied by Plato; philosophy is not beneficial for each and every person. [...] Plato and Socrates did not, however, think it is possible or desirable to try to transform everyone into a philosopher.”²⁵ Rather than presuppose that all can become philosophers, Griswold, like Strauss, sees Plato as speaking at two levels: on one level, Plato is offering salutary advice to the non-philosophers, with which philosophers neither exactly disagree nor agree, and on another level, Plato is attempting to “locate potential philosophers and transform them into philosophers.”²⁶ This, for Griswold, is the meaning of Socrates’s accounts of rhetoric and writing in the *Phaedrus*.

12. Lest one presume that the problem of natural hierarchy in Plato’s typologies of souls is an especially Straussian problem, we should also point, briefly, to Jessica Moss’s similar contention in her essay on the unity of the *Phaedrus* (to which we will return in Ch. 4). Moss’s interpretation of the *Phaedrus* hinges on the limitations she identifies in Plato’s accounts of interpersonal love’s capacity to accomplish soul-leading (*psuchagogia*), for, as she claims, love

and Literature, Vol. 26 (2002). For Griswold, unlike Strauss, Platonic irony is not necessarily dissimulative nor esoteric but instead a way of motivating the reader to look further (88). Crucial to Griswold’s own account of Plato’s use of irony is his helpful distinction between “Socratic irony” from “Platonic irony” (or “dramatic irony”). Socratic irony is *internal* to the dialogue, enacted by one character with reference to the other characters (and not the audience—or, at least, not directly). Though Socratic irony may in some places overlap with Platonic irony (cf. e.g., 98), generally, the two are distinct and have distinct ends. Platonic irony, unlike Socratic irony, is *structural* for the dialogue rather than internal to it. “A work exhibits dramatic irony (an irony which may be tragic or comic) if the meaning of the speeches and/or deeds of one or more of its characters is *primarily visible to the reader* (or audience) of the drama *rather than to the characters* in it. Through dramatic irony the author communicates to his or her audience over the heads, as it were, of the characters in the drama” (87; emphasis added; cf. 93). See the concordant remarks of Hyland (*Finitude and Transcendence*, Ch. 4) and Roochnik (“Irony and Accessibility,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 6 [1997]); see also Gordon’s development of the notion of dramatic irony in *Turning Toward Philosophy*, ch. 5. Tarrant, *Plato’s First Interpreters*, 108-110, notes it was common for professional Platonic hermeneuts in the ancient world to find dissatisfying any interpretation which relied on an ironic dissimulation that falsified the surface meaning of the text; to ignore a given statement on account of its supposed ironic mood was to fail in one’s hermeneutical duties.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 222.

“is a soul-leader available only to those lucky enough to fall in love with, or to be loved by, a philosophical type.”²⁷ Unfortunately, Phaedrus, like many of those whom Socrates meets in his peregrinations about Athens, is “not by nature a philosophical soul,” and so, by implication, Phaedrus cannot be converted to philosophy through interpersonal love.²⁸ Fortunately, however, Plato has developed a new craft (*technè*) for converting souls, namely, the art of psychagogic rhetoric (cf. 261c), which does not require that the auditor be by nature philosophical in order to succeed in its work, thereby escaping the limitations of interpersonal love.²⁹ Accordingly, we can say that, like Griswold and Strauss, Moss reads Plato as supposing that there is a “natural order of rank among men,” for some souls are by nature philosophical and thereby susceptible to the effects of psychagogic love, whereas other souls are not by nature philosophical and thus cannot be guided by love *in principle*. Unlike Griswold and Strauss, Moss does not take that distinction to warrant the postulation of two different moralities; instead, she sees a Plato trying to overcome those inherent distinctions among soul-types with a new, “egalitarian” art (and in this respect Moss’s reading is similar to Nussbaum’s),³⁰ for, as Moss rightly contends (contrary to Griswold and Strauss), philosophy is good for every soul, regardless of natural inclination or disinclination.

13. As the argument of this chapter will show, the illiberal reading of Plato (whether Straussian, Deleuzian, Griswoldian, or Mossite) doesn’t actually measure up to the text itself; as the next chapter will show, my arguments against an illiberal reading of Plato do not by any means push me into the Nussbaum or Markos camps, for, as we’ll see, I give reasons for why

²⁷ Jessica Moss, “Soul-Leading,” 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.* We will discuss the nature of Phaedrus’s soul and the way in which the dialogue characterizes him and his philosophical prospects in Ch. 5

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

neither of their understandings gets Plato right. In other words, this chapter, supplemented by the next chapter, argues that Plato neither posits essentializing distinctions between human souls, nor fails to recognize the fragility and contingency of the human soul's pursuit of the good.³¹ This chapter will focus on the *Palinode's* three different ways of distinguishing souls into different types. In the next chapter, we will contend, against Moss, that love does *not* presuppose the prior intellectual and moral formation of the lover and beloved in order to be effective; the reasoning for the argument of the next chapter will presuppose the success of this chapter's attempt to nullify any essentializing distinctions between "philosophical souls" and "non-philosophical souls," contrary to Moss's interpretation. Resolving the question of whether there are essential distinctions to be drawn between different types of soul is crucial for our investigation of soul-leading. If there are indeed essentially different soul-types, we would have to develop essentially distinct arts of soul-leading for each soul-type (recall that Strauss claims that Socrates leads philosophers toward truth and leads the many towards what's merely salutary, thus indicating that there are two arts of soul-leading specified by distinct ends), whereas if any distinctions within soul-types are relative to some overarching unity (as we'll claim), we would look instead to develop a single art of soul-leading (there is

³¹ It is also worth noting here—consistent with the hermeneutical practice deployed throughout this study—that my arguments are not primarily directed toward revealing what Plato himself thought, but instead develop an argument about what the texts themselves imply when one works through the logic of their principles consistently (the results of which would, as I think, give some indication of what Plato himself thought). As we briefly discussed in Ch. 1, it is possible that a text's meaning is irreducible to its author's intentions. Plato may intend for us to recognize precisely what I claim can be drawn from the *Phaedrus*, but it's also possible that he himself did not track the implications of his principles (something which may, in fact, be easier for others to do retrospectively, especially when there are later analogous precedents). Plato himself may have been quite illiberal, as his culture was and as even his great student Aristotle appears to be; it's also possible that the historical Plato was deeply inconsistent, as many profound philosophers have been (for example, Kant's understanding of universal human dignity, promulgated in the categorical imperative, did not prevent him from a remarkable degree of racism). It should be noted that, at least according to ancient accounts, Plato did *not* reflect his culture's misogyny (at least not to the same degree), insofar as he admitted female students to the Academy.

one art, ordered to one end, but the practice itself will be tailored based on the particular human subtype to be led).

§2. Preliminary Considerations

1. This section takes up two preliminary tasks. First, it briefly comments on the problematic nature of the hermeneutic Strauss brings to bear on the Platonic texts (and on pre-modern texts, generally). Since our task here is to interpret Plato, and not to interpret Strauss, we will only dwell on this point long enough to show why this particular aspect of Strauss's hermeneutics is neither necessary nor well-founded; accordingly, we don't need to *presuppose* that Plato himself presupposes a "natural order of rank among men."³²

2. Second, this section develops an account of why the Palinode *might* seem to indicate a natural hierarchy of soul-types in the *Phaedrus*. As we will see, the Palinode distinguishes and categorizes souls into hierarchies in three ways, and the three ways do, at first glance, each appear to indicate that there is some essential difference between philosophical and non-philosophical souls. After developing the case for an essential distinction, we will then proceed to show, in the rest of this chapter, why that case fails—the details of each of the three categorizations of soul-types in the *Phaedrus* undermine an essentializing distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical souls.

§2.1. Strauss's Imposed Anthropology

³² It should be noted that by criticizing Strauss's hermeneutics of persecution and esotericism, I do not mean to indict his hermeneutical approach as a whole; while I do take issue, as I discuss in passing throughout this work, with the Straussian use of irony and other "hermeneutically opaque" literary features to undermine the surface level of the text, which many later readers influenced by Strauss also deploy, I also tend to find Strauss himself and many later readers influenced by him to be both remarkably insightful about the true issues at stake and remarkably attentive to the dramatic features of the dialogues.

3. Strauss would, it seems, reject the line of thinking I am about to pursue on historical grounds, for he seems to understand the general run of pre-modern philosophical anthropology to be predicated on an insight concerning the natural, unalterable, and irrefragable hierarchy within humanity. In his most direct treatment of the matter, “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” Strauss contrasts the Enlightenment optimism concerning the possibility of universal education with pre-modern pessimism about natural distinctions between inferior and superior minds. Unlike the Enlightenment thinkers, who “concealed their views only far enough to protect themselves as well as possible from persecution,” but who otherwise wrote relatively straightforwardly so as to “enlighten an ever-increasing number of people who were not philosophers [...], the attitude of an earlier type of writers,” according to Strauss, “was fundamentally different. They believed that the gulf separating ‘the wise’ and ‘the vulgar’ was *a basic fact of human nature which could not be influenced by any progress of popular education*: philosophy, or science, was essentially a privilege of the few.”³³

4. This gulf between the wise and the vulgar, between philosophy and society, prompts the philosophers to develop a “peculiar manner of writing,”³⁴ an art of “writing between the lines.”³⁵ As we saw at the beginning of §1 above, Plato, according to Strauss, mastered this kind of writing in order to communicate truths to the few that would be considered heterodox by the many. The danger of persecution by the ignorant many—who cleave, like Plato’s cave-

³³ Strauss, “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” *Social Research*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1941), 500-501; emphasis added. In what seems to be a typical feature of Strauss’s own practice of “writing between the lines” (cf. *ibid.*, 490), he indicates his own view by a reference rather than by an assertion, for Strauss (implicitly) sides with the pessimistic anthropology he claims to find in premodern philosophy. By indicating rather than asserting, Strauss’s own writing practice remains consistent with his remarks about the esotericist’s use of plausible deniability (cf. *ibid.*, 492). Cf. Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 80, for how Strauss indicates his secret teachings “esoterically, obeying Maimonides’ injunction to disclose ‘only the “chapter headings”’ of the truth.” Later Rhodes articulates why Strauss needs to write esoterically (88).

³⁴ Strauss, “Forgotten Writing” 222.

³⁵ Strauss, “Persecution,” 490.

dwellers, to the shadows they self-congratulatingly identify so well (*Republic* 515b, 516c-d), who are ready to kill any who would dare to expose the falsity of their shadow-namings (517a)—requires a manner of writing that can discriminate audiences, a kind of publically-available “private communication” devoid of the dangers that attend publication.³⁶

5. What is at issue, then, is not just the strikingly illiberal assumption about human inequality, but also, and more importantly, its interpretation and the implications thereof. For, given the suggestion that philosophical writing takes the form it takes on account of the condition of *persecution*, and given the essentializing distinction between the philosophers and the many which occasions the danger of the persecution of the philosophers, philosophical writing becomes a kind of encoded espionage used to pass information to one’s allies within a class struggle, even a class *war*.³⁷ While it does indeed seem likely that a pre-modern thinker such as Plato would, or at least could, find the classical liberal notion of human equality implausible (see, for example, the “Myth of the Metals,” starting at *Republic* 414c),³⁸ it is unclear, and perhaps even unlikely, that a pre-modern thinker in the Platonic philosophical tradition would interpret this illiberal notion of human inequality vis-à-vis the contemptuous,

³⁶ See *ibid.*, 491, 503. On 492, Strauss gives what amounts to a programmatic statement of his hermeneutics: “Thus, one may very well wonder whether some of the greatest writers of the past have not adapted their literary technique to the requirements of persecution, by presenting their views on all the then crucial questions exclusively between the lines.” Strauss approvingly cites Lessing’s conviction that “‘all ancient philosophers’ had distinguished between their exoteric and their esoteric teaching” (494).

³⁷ Cf. Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 78, 92. On Rhodes’s read, Strauss’s deepest secret teaching is that “‘salutary’ opinions are salutary for the philosophers, not for society” and that “everything is permitted” for “philosophers who wage class warfare to preserve philosophy” (92). By contrast, Drury sees Strauss’s esotericism as motivated by a desire “to avert danger not only to themselves, but to the world” (“Esoteric Philosophy,” 323; cf. 320).

³⁸ On the myth, see note 63 below. For some reasons to think that Plato takes the myth to be true, see Max Latona, “This Tale is Not My Own (*ouk’ emos ho muthos*): Myth and Recollection in Plato,” *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2004), 201-202.

Nietzschean interpretation of a “pathos of distance,”³⁹ as Strauss seems to do. Indeed, the aforementioned Myth of the Metals is, in fact, a myth, and thus carries a certain hermeneutical opacity with which we need to deal.⁴⁰

6. I do not intend to argue with Strauss directly about his illiberal reading of Plato, but my response can be seen in my discussion of the competing philosophical anthropologies begun in Ch. 2 and continued in subsequent chapters. As a preliminary response (to be worked out in greater detail over the course of this chapter), we could say that in the *Palinode*, Socrates does distinguish a nine-fold hierarchy of lives (see 248c-e), wherein the philosopher’s lot is unambiguously preferable to that of any other soul-type, but, on the one hand, one’s placement in that nine-fold hierarchy is *an always revisable result* of how one led one’s life in the past millenary cycle(s) (see 248e-249d), and, on the other hand, *every* positioning within that nine-fold hierarchy is available only to a soul that has at some point been human. By nature, *all* human beings have been to the super-heavenly place and are capable of understanding

³⁹ On this, see Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 1. For something akin to the “pathos of distance” in Strauss, see Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 93. Cf. Roochnik, “Irony and Accessibility,” 871: “The elitism implicit in Strauss’s hermeneutic presupposes a radical gulf between those capable of mining for the truth and those in need of superficial opinion. The true teaching of the dialogue is hidden from those who would neither understand nor benefit from it (and who [...] would, if exposed to the philosophical teaching, bring harm to the philosophers).”

⁴⁰ Given that the Myth of the Metals is part of Socrates’s task of creating a “city in speech” *in order to envision the soul writ large* (cf. *Republic* 368d ff.), it is certainly possible that Socrates does not intend to give an analysis of the natural hierarchy within the human community along political or caste lines, but instead to give an analysis of the natural hierarchy of the three parts of the soul, using the city as an image. Note the crucial qualifier at 368d: “if, of course, [the two analogues in question] do happen to be the same.” There is significant disagreement among commentators about 1. Whether the *Republic* is a work of political philosophy, philosophical psychology, or both, 2. Whether the analogy between the soul and the city is exact (i.e., does every *a* that is true of *x* correspond to an *a'* that is true of *y*?), and 3. Whether we are meant to take all that Socrates says during his discussion of the creation and dissolution of the city in speech as his own view. Addressing these disputes is well beyond the scope of this project. McCoy notes that the Cave later gets rid of any natural distinctions, like those suggested by the Myth of the Metals, in its treatment of the prisoner’s escape from the cave. The escapee is never said to be a philosopher or to have a philosophical nature; indeed the cave “describes much better what it is like to become philosophical after previously living an unphilosophical life” compared to having been brought up in philosophy (*Image and Argument*, 228). Further, “the *experience* of education trumps any particular natural abilities and differences” (230).

according to form (see 249b-c, 249e-250a), even if in any given particular life some humans are not particularly adept at “handling reminders” (249c) of their pre-nascent memories. Thus, in principle, through right conduct, any soul that has been in human form can become a philosopher, and so the Straussian hierarchy could not be true in principle (based, at least, on the Palinode’s account), even if inequality may be a practical hurdle to which we have to respond. Part of the *Phaedrus*’s project, as I interpret it, is precisely to discern ways by which particular souls in all their complexity and different initial configurations can be *led* to a simpler form of life ordered toward a knowing contact with reality (though, notably, this is not to be accomplished through a *technē*, at least not in Nussbaum’s sense).

7. Besides the apparent inconsistency between Strauss’s view and the letter of the text at hand, it should be noted that Strauss’s political motivations for esotericism and “writing between the lines” has a certain—dubious—*pre-textual* cast to it. While Strauss’s “Persecution and the Art of Writing” begins by giving grounds for why it *could* be possible that great historical writers have “written between the lines” in the face of persecution,⁴¹ Strauss uses the supposition that pre-modern writers were *inclined* to see a natural distinction between the vulgar and the wise, coupled with the “crucial premise” that “opinion is the element of

⁴¹ Strauss, “Persecution,” 492. Strauss is certainly correct about this point on its own. Some great historical writers have “written between the lines” or used various literary means in order to ensure that their writings could discriminate audiences in their absence. Some were even quite upfront about it. For example, see the opening paragraph of Boethius’s “The Trinity is One God, Not Three Gods” (*De Trinitate*): “I purposely use brevity and wrap up the ideas I draw from the deep questionings of philosophy in new and unaccustomed words such as speak only to you and to myself, that is, if you ever look at them. The rest of the world I simply disregard since those who cannot understand seem unworthy even to read them” (*The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003], 5). Tarrant reports that the ancient Neopythagoreans tended toward something like a Proto-Straussian esotericism in their readings of Plato (*Plato’s First Interpreters*, 85). For example, Numenius claims that Plato critiques Athenian religion indirectly by having Socrates criticize Euthyphro, a stand in for Athens, on account of his bad theology so that Plato could remain safe and avoid having “furnished the Athenians with another occasion to turn bad, and kill him as they had done Socrates” (fr. 23, in *Platonist Philosophy*, text 2.1).

society,”⁴² to indicate that they *must always* “conceal their opinions from all but philosophers.”⁴³ In a word, Strauss has *pre-textually universalized* the condition of persecution for philosophers, who must thus write esoterically in response to this condition, *even if* there is no *factual* persecution taking place. “*Even if*,” Strauss avers, “*they had nothing to fear from any particular political quarter*, those who started from that *assumption* would have been driven to the conclusion that public communication of the philosophic or scientific truth was impossible or undesirable, *not only for the time being but for all times*.”⁴⁴

8. Admittedly, Strauss does state that one of the criteria by which we can assess whether a writer is writing esoterically is that “the book in question must have been composed in an era of persecution.”⁴⁵ Again, admittedly, this does not *seem* to be an empty criterion, for Strauss does suggest that there have been particular, liberal societies wherein a philosophical writer could freely condemn his society exoterically.⁴⁶ But, according to the logic of his presuppositions, does the factual-historical presence of liberal societies, open to criticism, *matter*? No, for if one is already *inclined* to see the non-philosophical masses as ignorant and inferior, and if one recognizes that society is founded ultimately on groundless opinion, then one *must* be constantly vigilant—paranoid—for that public opinion can change in a heartbeat, and thus *every* society is in principle a society in which philosophers run the risk of persecution. Indeed, Strauss goes on to note the “tension,” which social scientists so often “fail to see,” built into the philosopher’s or scientist’s habitation in the city: “if I know that the principles of liberal democracy are not intrinsically superior to the principles of communism or fascism,

⁴² Strauss, “Forgotten Writing,” 222.

⁴³ Strauss, “Persecution,” 501.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 498.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., “Forgotten Writing,” 224.

I am incapable of whole-hearted commitment to liberal democracy.”⁴⁷ Regardless of whether the principles of one regime are better than those of another, the point stands that if society is *essentially* built atop ignorant opinion (upon political theologies and mythologies), and if the philosopher knows the truth about this, then the philosopher will not be committed to the principles of the city in which she finds herself; further, because society is built atop ignorant opinion, there is nothing to “tie it down,” so that it remains consistent. Today’s liberal democracy is tomorrow’s fascist state, as Strauss knew all too well. Recognizing this, the Straussian philosopher must *always* conceive of herself as writing within the condition of persecution, if she is indeed a philosopher who recognizes the truth about the world, *regardless of her factual political situation*. But, since this conclusion follows from a conflation of the actual condition of persecution with the *mere possibility* of persecution, persecution has become a matter of perception, and philosophical writing becomes hifalutin dog-whistling.⁴⁸

9. Similarly, if we can infer that texts can discriminate audiences in such a way that they are silent, “closed books” to those who are “unsuited to philosophizing,” as Griswold

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴⁸ Strauss’s principles, then, lead him into the same kind of totalizing argument we see in Locke’s treatment of theft (Ch. 3 of the *Second Treatise on Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Lee Ward [Indianapolis: Focus, 2016]). Locke introduces the natural right “to destroy that which threatens me with destruction” as a consequence of the “fundamental law of nature” regarding self-preservation (II.3.16). Whoever “attempts to get another man into his absolute power, does thereby put himself into a state of war with him” (II.3.17), because one who seeks to coerce another in this way “would use me as he pleased” and “destroy me too when he had a fancy to it” (II.3.17). This, Locke claims, “makes it lawful for a man to kill a thief who has not in the least hurt him nor declared any design upon his life any farther than by the use of force [...] because using force, where he has no right, to get me into his power, *let his pretence be what it will, I have no reason to suppose that he, who would take away my liberty would not, when he had me in his power, take away everything else*. And therefore it is lawful for me to treat him as one who has put himself into a state of war with me, i.e. kill him if I can” (II.3.18; emphasis added). Note that in this argument, as in Strauss’s, Locke collapses the distinction between a *possible* state of affairs and an *actual* state of affairs, and responds to a *possible* state of affairs *as if* it were an *actual* state of affairs, and thereby collapses not just a “perceived injury” but “the perception of the very possibility of an injury” into an *actual* injury. The criterion for determining right is moved from the nature of the thing to my mere perception, which need not adequately reflect the nature of the thing. See Schindler, *Freedom From Reality*, 74-77.

suggests, while being loquacious toward the intended audience,⁴⁹ we run the risk of developing an unfalsifiable, and ultimately arbitrary hermeneutic. As White has noted: “The problem with this appeal to systematic silence is obvious. For if the surface meaning of the text can be readily denied to establish the silent meaning, then the text can mean whatever the interpreter wants it to mean.”⁵⁰ Though it is undeniable that a prospective reader could, in some sense, be in a position that renders her inadequate to receive the message at hand (or, at least, the deepest aspects or fullness of that message, as is the case for all but the philosophical type in the Palinode’s nine-fold hierarchy of souls; cf. 248c-e), this inadequacy is a failure of the recipient, not an imposition of the text, and the recipient’s inadequacy is in principle resolvable (as we will discuss below). In other words, to say that the text’s message is unheard is not the same as to say that the text is silent.

10. Strauss is aware of the kind of objection levied by White. The “modern historian,” Strauss says, “wins” the contest of interpretations on account of the *necessary* (given the assumptions about persecution and the practice of “writing between the lines” that follows therefrom) lack of positive evidence for the esotericist’s claims; “He can dismiss any reading between the lines as arbitrary guesswork.”⁵¹ Likewise, Strauss notes George Sabine’s criticism that it’s unclear whether Strauss’s “canon for reading certain great books” provides, as Sabine wonders, “a workable rule for historical interpretation or an invitation to perverse ingenuity.”⁵² Strauss responds to both objections in a similar way: is it really surprising that my hermeneutic won’t yield scholarly consensus? Does any hermeneutic do so?⁵³ Is it surprising that my

⁴⁹ Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 221.

⁵⁰ White, *Rhetoric and Reality in Plato’s Phaedrus*, 244-245.

⁵¹ Strauss, “Persecution,” 493.

⁵² Strauss, “Forgotten Writing,” 223.

⁵³ See Strauss, “Persecution,” 497.

hermeneutic might be “misunderstood or misused”? Has any hermeneutic avoided misuse?⁵⁴ As the medievals say, *abusus non tollit usum* (“abuse does not take away from use”). While a healthy reminder about the fallibility of any hermeneutical method—and, more importantly, of any hermeneut—is certainly apt, is that *actually* what’s at stake here? By universalizing the condition of persecution, whereby we have license to understand *any* “wise” work of philosophy to be written in such a way as to discriminate between the elite and the many, regardless of historical fact, Strauss’s approach *necessarily* retains an arbitrary element. This approach rends the surface- and depth-levels of the text at hand. The text, for Strauss, reveals itself in its “truth” *only* to the philosopher. Unfortunately, the philosophers don’t seem to agree on just what the textual irony is supposed to reveal, as evidenced by the fact that a number of Strauss’s students resist a number of Strauss’s key claims.⁵⁵ Further, it is always possible that the “contradiction” or textual “misstep,” which is the whole basis of the Straussian hermeneutic, is not actually a contradiction or misstep in the text at all, but rather the mere *appearance* of contradiction to a reader who is insufficiently educated about the subject matter at hand.

11. The only way to retain an appreciation for irony and other hermeneutically opaque features of the text without falling into the trap of arbitrariness is by insisting on the necessity of a connection between the surface- and depth-level meanings of the text. If the two levels are *wholly diverse*, then the “depth-level” meaning must necessarily be imposed by the interpreter, for what other provenance could it have if the surface-level doesn’t open onto the

⁵⁴ Strauss, “Forgotten Writing,” 223.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Rosen, “Straussian Hermeneutics,” 35, and “Chicago Days,” *Essays in Philosophy: Ancient*, 9-10. Rosen criticizes Strauss’s “cryptogram model” the Platonic text for being circular (“Straussian Hermeneutics,” 54-57).

depth-level and lead the audience thereunto?⁵⁶ In other words, Strauss's hermeneutic imposes the problem Parmenides raises (anticipating Kant) in his eponymous dialogue, but in a new form: if there's no connection between surface-level and depth-level (between instance and form), then how can I ever come to any apprehension of the depth-level, when all that is present to my perception is the surface-level? As Parmenides criticizes his own articulation of Socrates's hypothesis, "The things among us have no power in relation to those things, nor they to us" (*Parmenides* 133e; cf. 134d-135b).⁵⁷ In other words, the separation is absolute and unmediated, so there can be no rational articulation of the depth-level. Our task, then, is to explore the depth-level of the Platonic text by going *through* the surface-level.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ As Gordon notes, irony functions in the dialogues not only to distinguish groups into those who "get it" and those who don't, but also (sometimes) to lead someone (an interlocutor, the reader) from being one of those who don't "get it" to being one who does; see *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 127-128. Irony thus can have a psychagogic function in Plato; cf. similarly McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 32-34. Roochnik criticizes contemporary Straussians for being "deficient [...]" precisely because they misconstrue the meaning of the surface-depth relationship in a Platonic dialogue. These authors denigrate the surface by treating it as a philosophically insignificant facade. They disconnect surface from depth and thereby disrupt the structural continuity [...]. Far from being superficial cant, and as opposed to being a screen or a disguise, the surface must be respected as a significant dimension of the philosophical content of the dialogue itself. [...] I hold that the surface of the dialogue is a phenomenon that must be philosophically preserved. Even if the surface is transfigured as the result of a philosophical interpretation of the dialogue as a whole, such transfiguration must be conceived as an *Aufhebung*, a dialectical sublation that does not only simply negate but also preserves what is being negated by elevating it. [...] In other words, the commentator must assume that the superficial reader can be taught, and such teaching should begin with a clear articulation of the surface. [...] The wide variety of surface phenomena of Plato's dialogues—everything from the explicit arguments to the myths—have a 'face value,' and while the face is but the exterior of a human being, it remains, even when the interior is probed, what we look at and what looks back at us. Even when we know someone exceptionally well, even if we are able to see through them, we cannot overlook, nor should we fail to be guided by, the face. The face, in other words, is not a mask, and so it cannot be discarded" ("Irony and Accessibility, 871-872). I am in complete agreement with Roochnik about these points (if not also concerning Roochnik's particular readings of the dialogues). I am also in agreement with Roochnik's suggestions that his understanding of Platonic irony and multi-level textuality, as opposed to that of Strauss, would yield a more liberal, democratic understanding of human nature (cf. 871, 884). See also Guardini, *Death of Socrates*, 6; Griswold, "Irony," 99-101; and Desjardins, "Why Dialogues?" 112-113, 118.

⁵⁷ Citations of the *Parmenides* come from the translation of Trans. Albert Whitaker (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 1996).

⁵⁸ In Ch. 6, we will go on to discuss why Plato's way of writing *necessarily* follows from his metaphysical vision; this metaphysical vision, as we shall claim in Ch. 6, requires that the surface- and depth-levels of *reality itself* be fundamentally connected despite also being radically distinct. We will also return to the

§2.2. The Case for Essentializing Distinctions in the *Phaedrus's* Myth

12. In the prior subsection, we argued that Strauss's interpretation of Plato, which takes Plato to recognize and uphold an essentializing distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical natures, is, to some extent, vitiated by a dubious pre-textual claim built into Strauss's hermeneutics. In this section, we consider the text of the *Phaedrus* itself to see whether there is reason to suppose that Plato does uphold such an essentializing distinction, without recourse to any prior commitments to Straussian hermeneutics.

13. As Moss argues, the Palinode seems to distinguish *essentially* between the recently initiated souls, whom love can lead, and the corrupted souls, for whom love would be inefficacious. Love, for Moss, requires a soul that is already intellectually and morally disposed toward philosophy in order to do its psychagogic work; the corrupt soul, unlike the recently initiated soul, is neither intellectually nor morally suited to love's work. The corrupted soul "fails to experience true reverence as he gazes" on the beautiful beloved, and instead "yields to pleasure" (250e). We recall that the dangerous, humanly-sick love, against which the anti-erotic speeches justly warn, occurs precisely when desire for pleasure reigns victoriously over the soul's other capacities in the contest for the leadership role (238c; *nikēsasā agōgēi*). By contrast to the corrupted soul, the "recent initiate" experiences fear, awe, and "reverence as if he were before a god" (251a). Such reverence, experienced on account of the recent initiate's capacity to be transported from the beauty of the beloved to a memory of Beauty itself as through an iconic image (249c, 250e), heralds the lover's reception of nourishing truth by which the "natural power of the wing" is restored (249c, 251b), thereby equipping the recent

metaphysical impasse about the disconnect between the "realm" of the forms and our phenomenal "realm" there.

initiate to follow the gods back to the “Plain of Truth.” Given that the corrupt soul fails to experience reverence, she will be unable to regrow her wings; consequently, she cannot follow the gods in the divine circuit. Love would not, it would seem, be an effective soul-leader for the corrupted soul on account of its failure to be transported from perceptual experiences of beauty back to Beauty itself.

14. In addition to the distinction between the corrupt and the recently initiated, the Palinode also distinguishes souls according to the gods they followed (e.g., Zeus-followers vs. Ares-followers) and according to the “amount” of truth each soul saw above the heavens (into one of nine “soul-types,” according to the “Inescapable Law” [*thesmos Adrasteias*; my translation]; 248c). Both of these assortments of soul-types seem to hierarchize souls into better and worse categories, and the properties of soul shared by those in the apparently best categories (the Zeus-follower, the philosopher) seem to converge with those of the recently-initiated. Thus, we might be able to interpret the distinction between the corrupt and the recently-initiated by reference to the distinctions between Zeus-followers versus those who follow other gods and between philosophers and those who inhabit different soul types.⁵⁹ The recently-initiated, philosophical, Zeus-following soul is the only soul which can “correctly handle such reminders” and thereby be “perpetually initiated” (249c). Souls from the other eight soul-types, who are what they are on account of seeing “less” of the truth than the

⁵⁹ While we may be able to coordinate the three distinctions on their joint distinction of the philosophical soul (recently initiated, Zeus-following) from non-philosophical souls (corrupt, following other gods), it seems abundantly clear that there is no way to correlate the nine-fold hierarchy of soul-types which follows the “Inescapable Law” (248c-e) and the eleven- or twelve-fold hierarchy of soul-types determined by which god each soul follows (the ambiguity on how many soul-types are determined by god-following is on account of the ambiguity of whether or not Hestia, who alone of the gods stays home, is counted among the Olympian ranks which lead the various armies of souls; cf. 246e-247a). I don’t intend to propose any such correlation; if my argument here is successful, we will have good reasons for thinking that there is no need to correlate the two lists.

philosophical type (because of the disharmony internal to their souls, as discussed in Ch. 2), would be unable, like the corrupt, to correctly handle reminders. Consequently, non-philosophical souls will be unable to be transported back to truth through love, and thus love will not be a successful soul-leader for such souls, as Moss claims.⁶⁰

15. All told, it seems like we have a basic distinction between (1) the recently initiated, philosophical soul, who followed Zeus in the cosmic circuit, saw the most of truth, and is able to handle reminders of truth well and is thus able to be transported back to truth in memory, and (2) the corrupt soul, who is non-philosophical in nature, followed a different god in the cosmic circuit (the deleterious effects of which on one's love life being noted at, for example, 252c), and is unable to recognize reminders *as* reminders on account of its pleasure-lust (as noted at 250e-251a). But how firmly must we draw this distinction? Is Griswold right to claim that "the crucial distinction within Socrates' account of the soul's destiny lies between the category of philosophers and that of all the other soul types?" That this distinction "is clearly the palinode's main diairesis of the human race?"⁶¹ Does this "diairesis" distinguish souls into discrete essence-types, and if so, does such a distinction license the inference that the recently initiated and the corrupt *must* have different experiences of love's efficacy? To what extent are the experiences of various soul-types determined? Can a soul given to corruptness change its

⁶⁰ In a similar vein, Griswold claims that the "comedy" of the *Phaedrus* lies in the fact that Phaedrus is not a Zeus-follower (see *Self-Knowledge*, 130); see Ch. 5 for discussion of Phaedrus's character.

⁶¹ Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 101.

ways, or is it bound by its prenatal experience, as if by a Platonic version of “double-predestination?”⁶² Or is the so-called “noble lie” actually *a lie*?⁶³

16. I argue that certain details of the *Palinode* suggest that essentializing distinctions—between the recently initiated and the corrupt, between Zeus-followers and the followers of other gods, and between the philosophical souls and the other eight soul-types subject to the “Inescapable Law”—do not hold. If the distinction is more a matter of degree than kind, then it would seem that all souls fall within a continuum of degrees of formation, buttressed by inhuman outer limits (the animal and the divine), which we can never truly inhabit. Our task going forward is to see whether an essentializing distinction between the philosophical soul and the non-philosophical soul is actually supported by the *Palinode*’s claims and logic. We will attend to each of the three ways of drawing this distinction (corrupt/recently initiated, philosopher/other eight soul-types, Zeus-follower/follower of another god), and in each case we will see some reason for thinking that the distinction is better understood as either a

⁶² Griswold, for example, expresses a deep skepticism that there can be much “improvement” between the various lives one lives during one’s unwinged state. Our initial “choice” concerning which god we follow is, according to Griswold, a blind choice, for it seems to take place before the ascent, unguided by any vision of the beings (*Self-Knowledge*, 100). Consequently, the soul-type into which we are thrown in our first wingless life is more a matter of chance than choice (*ibid.*, 101). On the basis of the myth, “The most that can be hoped for is that eventually all souls will gravitate upward in the hierarchy of lives, and that everyone will become a philosopher. The myth does not exclude this happening, but it makes it very improbable. In any event it excludes the possibility that political or social reforms can bring it about” (*ibid.*, 101-102). We will see that the details of the dialogue provide some reasons for thinking that Griswold is overstating the improbability of improvement.

⁶³ In Book III of the *Republic*, Socrates suggests that the ideal regime of the city in speech will have to be founded on a “noble lie” (see 414b-415c). This “Phoenician tale” claims that all human beings are born into one of three natural castes (gold, silver, or bronze, as per the “myth of the metals”), and that one’s birth dictates what kind of position one will have in the city (ruler, auxiliary, serf). The tale uses essentializing distinctions among human beings to legitimate a political hierarchy. If Plato does indeed recognize essentializing distinctions among human types, we must ask why Plato would elsewhere characterize such distinctions as a “lie.” Among commentators, perhaps none more than Strauss has been unwilling to accept the falsity of the “noble lie,” for an essentializing distinction between the philosophers and the non-philosophers seems to be *the* basic assumption undergirding both his hermeneutics and his politics, as we discussed above. Discussing Socrates’s use of the noble lie in its context (the founding of the city in speech) in the *Republic* is beyond the scope of this project.

distinction in degree within a single category or as a distinction which tracks real, but non-hierarchizable traits.⁶⁴ In either case, the distinctions among the human souls are relativized within the more governing distinction of kind between the animal, the human, and the divine.⁶⁵

17. As we consider the different ways of distinguishing soul-types in this section, we will pay special attention to Plato's use of *diagein* (to lead-through), which occurs frequently in the *Palinode*. In each case, it refers to the way in which one conducts one's life (or, to be more literal, how one leads one's life through).⁶⁶ As we will see, the way in which one conducts one's life is not simply decided by our placement in any of the soul-typologies, but is largely a matter of choice and social influence.

§3. Distinction 1: The Corrupt vs. the Initiated

§3.1 Can the Corrupt Soul Be Healed?

1. Our task, then, is to determine to what extent the distinctions proposed—between the recently initiated and corrupt, the philosophical and non-philosophical, and the Zeus-followers and followers of other gods—distinguish different essential types within human

⁶⁴ See Nicholson, *The Philosophy of Love*, 180: "Having seen truth makes us human. But remaining close in memory to truth makes us philosophers (249c5-c6). The philosophical life is just a further increment to what it is to be human. And in both ways we have an affinity to the gods, for they too enjoy a vision of the ideas."

⁶⁵ Cf. Socrates's playful etymological analysis of "human being" at *Cratylus* 399c: "this name 'human being' (*anthrōpōs*) signifies that the other animals don't look into or gather up or observe (*anathrei*) the things they see, but a human being, at the same time that he's seen—that's the *has seen* (*to opōpe*)—also observes and takes account of that which he has seen (*ho opōpen*). And that's why a human being, alone among the animals, is rightly named a 'human being,' *one who observes what he has seen* (*anathrōn ha opōpe*)" Citations of the *Cratylus* come from the translation of Joe Sachs in *Socrates and the Sophists: Plato's Protagoras, Euthydemus, Hippias Major, and Cratylus* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2011).

⁶⁶ *Diagein* occurs in the *Palinode* at 248e, 249a, 256b, and twice at 256d. Outside of the *Palinode*, it occurs while discussing the myth of the Cicadas at 259d and while discussing the life of the playful writer at 276d. The etymologically-related term, *diēgēsis*, occurs once at the beginning of the *Palinode* (246a) and once in the discussion of the rhetorical manuals (266e); see the Appendix. At *Theaetetus* 174a-b, Socrates refers to the those who, like the Thracian servant girl with respect to Thales, jest at those who lead-through their lives in philosophy (*en philosophiai diagousi*); cf. *Phaedo* 81a; VII.335d.

nature. Either, as some commentators (like Moss, Griswold, and Strauss) claim, philosophical souls are essentially distinct from non-philosophical souls, and thus have basically different experiences during their wingless exile from the divine circuit, or, as I claim, those distinctions do not track essential differences, but instead, track differences in degree or non-hierarchizable differences, which are relativized within the fundamental ontological distinction between the gods, human souls, and animal souls. We will take each distinction in turn.

2. First, and foremost, we must attend carefully to the way by which Socrates draws the distinction between the corrupt and the recently initiated, which undergirds Moss's analysis of love's failure to lead those souls not disposed by nature to philosophy. The corrupt will, upon seeing an image of beauty here, fail "to experience true reverence as he gazes" and will yield to pleasure (250e). However, Socrates does *not* say that the corrupt is utterly unable to be transported from the image of beauty to Beauty itself; rather, "the person who has been corrupted or who is not a recent initiate is not conveyed *quickly* (*oxeōs ... pheretai*) to beauty itself, that is, he is not carried from here to there quickly" (250e; emphasis added). The qualifying adverb suggests that the corrupt still can be so conveyed, but because the process is slow for the corrupt, pleasure-lust and other forces that might direct the soul away from reunion with reality have more time to exert control and lead the corrupt further into corruption.

3. If, as the qualifying adverb suggests, the distinction between the recently initiated and the corrupt is not qualitative but rather drawn according to the speed and ease of recollection, we should be able to witness, or at least imagine, scenarios in which a corrupt soul heals and recollects. We will discuss a couple different ways by which the corrupt soul

can be healed and can thereby recollect before turning to further reasons why the distinction at hand is not essentializing.

4. The most direct way by which the corrupt soul can be healed and come to recollect given by the *Phaedrus* lies in the divine madnesses, particularly the “teletic” madness which comes from Dionysus (265b). This madness is given by Dionysus specifically to “families which have been afflicted with the severest diseases and toils from some sort of ancient blood-guilt” (244d) so that they might find “deliverance” and be taken “out of harm’s way” by rites and purifications (244e). If Dionysian frenzy can indeed deliver us from the severest diseases which stem from some ancient blood-guilt, it would certainly be within the gods’ power to heal corrupt souls so that they might be returned to a condition suitable for “mak[ing] contact with their gods through memory” (253a). Socrates undertakes just such a “teletic” ritual, following Stesichorus’s example, in giving his Palinode (243a-b); he thereby heals the blindness he had imposed on himself by giving his veiled, anti-erotic speech (237a). Accordingly, the dialogue presents the possibility that the corrupt can be healed by divine power, and so “corruption” seems to be less a definitive state than a malleable condition. Nothing prevents Dionysus and Love from giving their gifts in tandem, such that one who was once corrupt becomes healed and thereby well-disposed for Love’s inspiration.

5. Further, both Socrates and Phaedrus are described as being divinely frenzied by Dionysus (228b, 234d).⁶⁷ It is clearly the case that the poetic tradition is, at best, ambivalent on Dionysian frenzy (for Dionysian frenzy is the cause of Pentheus’s dismemberment in the *Bacchae*), and it also clearly the case that the *Phaedrus* itself mirrors that ambivalence. Socrates

⁶⁷ We’ll discuss the ways in which Socrates and Phaedrus are influenced by the divine and the topography in Ch. 5.

admits to being caught up in a Dionysian frenzy with Phaedrus following the recitation of Lysias's speech (234d) and then proceeds to give an anti-erotic speech under the influence of this frenzy; Socrates alludes to his persistent Dionysian frenzy in his reference to speaking in dithyrambs (241e), just after the culmination of his attack on Love (241c-d). These references are assuredly playful, but, as "playfulness is sister to seriousness" (VI.323d), the connection made in the playfulness between Dionysian frenzy and mindless speechifying is not idle. The Palinode's references to Dionysus, by contrast, are situated within Socrates's discussion of the various ways in which "the greatest of all good things come to us through madness, provided that the madness is divinely given" (244a). Not only is "telestic" madness attributed to Dionysus, but also the poetic madness has a Dionysian element, for the Muses' poetic madness "arouses and fills [a tender soul] with a Dionysiac frenzy" (245a). Adapting Socrates's way of retracting his disparagement of Love, we might say that if Dionysus is "a god or at least something divine," then "he could not be bad in any way" (242e), even if the inadequacy of our initial perspective on the matter seems to indicate that Dionysus is somehow responsible for Socrates's slander of Love. Whatever madneses a genuinely divine Dionysus gives are given out of care for those who are frenzied (as we'll discuss in the following chapters), even if the frenzied (or we onlookers) aren't yet able to see the fruits of such a frenzy. Minimally, if we accept the logic of the Palinode, we should expect that the Dionysian frenzy, to which Socrates and Phaedrus are jointly subjected, has been given for the pair's good, *if*, that is, it was, in fact, divinely given. Given the portfolio attributed to Dionysus in the *Phaedrus*, we might expect that Dionysian frenzy has been given to our interlocutors for the joint purpose of purifying them from guilt (corruption) and "arranging and edifying the countless deeds of the ancients for the edification of generations to come" (245a), a task which seems to anticipate the wise writer's task (as we'll discuss in the final chapter).

6. While divine inspiration is certainly sufficient to heal the corrupt and thereby allow those who were corrupt to recollect, direct divine action in the form of telestic madness is not necessary for the corrupt to be re-oriented. Though it certainly seems plausible that the corrupt will only increase their corruption through the pursuit of pleasure (even “unnatural pleasure,” as per 250e-251a), the very act of pursuing pleasures, which seems to be the hallmark of the corrupt, *may*, in fact, begin a curative process in the soul. Notably, it is the wanton horse which drives the whole soul toward the beloved in the Palinode, and in doing so provides the occasion for the “charioteer’s memory to be carried to the essence of the beautiful” (254a-b; we will discuss this episode in greater detail in the next chapter). The pursuit of pleasure is most apt to provide the occasion for healing the soul when the soul is guided into a recognition of the comparative triviality of the pleasures at hand. Of course, the corrupted soul cannot become healed insofar as it persists in corruption; rather, the corrupted soul’s pursuit of its desires supplies the occasion for transforming the way in which the corrupted soul relates to its desires, and that transformation *is* (or at least begins) the healing of the soul.

7. Before further discussion of the ways by which the corrupted soul’s corrupted acts and desires can provide occasions for healing, it is worth clarifying what exactly corruption, corrupt acts, and corrupt desires *are*, for it is easy to misunderstand the logic of Plato’s understanding of goodness and desirability, especially insofar as Plato (or, at least, “Platonism”) *seems* so apt to condemn as evil the body, bodily desires, and pleasure.⁶⁸ We might gain traction on the matter at hand by asking “is the corrupted soul corrupt because it love bad things, or is the corrupted soul corrupt because it loves good things badly?” For both textual and philosophical reasons, we must opt for the latter. In Plato’s metaphysical vision,

⁶⁸ As will soon become clear, I do not take Plato to condemn the body, bodily desires, or pleasure as evil, but modern Platonic scholarship has persistently (if not unanimously) interpreted Plato in such terms.

to be *is* to be good, for all that *is* comes from a truly good, generous, and desirable source. This is most evident in *Republic* VI's "analogy of the sun," and since the point at hand is subsidiary, we'll take the more direct approach.⁶⁹

§3.2. Digression: The Analogy of the Sun and the Meaning of Corruption

8. Socrates claims that we say, and have "already often repeated on other occasions" that there are many good things, distinguishable in speech, but also a "good itself;" "we refer to one *idea* of each as though the *idea* were one: and we address it as that which really *is*" (*Republic* 507a-b). This *idea* of the good is "the greatest study," and we must come to some knowledge of it if we hope to profit from knowledge of anything else (505a, 505e-506a; cf. *Laws* 716c). Our knowledge of all else is neither profitable to us nor *adequate* (506a) without knowledge of the *idea* of the Good, for there is no profit "in possessing something in the absence of the good" (505a), especially given that, when it comes to goodness, we are not content with mere opinion or reputation, but instead "seek the things that *are*" as that "for the

⁶⁹ The "place of the good" in the *Phaedrus* will be discussed in Ch. 6. As Mark Shiffman has suggested to me, the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedrus* all center around the three primary notions of goodness, truth, and beauty, but each dialogue seems to address only two at a time in their "ascent" passages: the *Republic*, on goodness and truth, the *Symposium*, on goodness and beauty, and the *Phaedrus*, on beauty and truth. The absence of the good as the fundamental ontological principle in the *Phaedrus* is not, I claim, an indication that the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic* are inconsistent in their ontologies, but instead an indication that Plato recognizes that the truth about the "true nature of things" (*Phaedrus* 247c) is something of which "none of the poets here on earth have ever sung the praises [...], nor will any ever sing of it *adequately*" (*ibid.*, emphasis added), and yet we "must have the courage to speak." As we'll discuss in our final chapter, *no* account can ever adequately capture the nature of reality, even if it is possible that any number of accounts may be adequate to the anagogic transportation of the hearer into contact with that which is ineffable. The ascent passages in these three dialogues (as well as that in the digression of the *Seventh Letter*) are each self-consciously aware of the impossibility of saying the unsayable and thus remain essentially incomplete of necessity, *even though* they are able to accomplish their anagogic work in and through that incompleteness. We might say that the ascent passages are, in a sense, "completely incomplete" insofar as they each recognize 1. that ascent is possible, 2. that the ascent passages are a means thereunto in exactly the same way that an image can transport the viewer from the image to the thing imaged, and 3. that the ascent passages nevertheless cannot exhaust the very thing the contact with which they are designed to mediate (just as an image can't exhaust the thing imaged even as it mediates a contact with the thing imaged).

sake of which” the soul does everything it does (505d). The soul seeks the genuine good in each of its acts, for the good is desirable, and the soul does not rest content, except in the genuine good. The three images at the center of the *Republic*—the Analogy of the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Allegory of the Cave—all present the good and the way by which we “ascend” from the inadequacy of a vision of good things to the good itself, by which good things are good.⁷⁰

9. Though Socrates introduces the *idea* of the Good in a way that resembles his introductions of the forms elsewhere—that is, as the real being of an x and the nature by which some x is an x—the Analogy quickly indicates that the *idea* of the Good has a larger role to play than being the metaphysical source, paradigm, and cause of good things. Or, more accurately, whereas the extension of instances of some form, F, is all of the things that have F-ness as their essential nature or property, the extension of instances of the Good is *universal*. *All* things are instances of the Good. The Good is the cause of *all*, not just of their being such-and-such (being good), but of their being *as such*. The Good is not a form *among* forms or a cause among causes (and much less a being among beings), but something more like the *formality* of form, the *causality* of cause.⁷¹ Socrates demands that we “say that not only being

⁷⁰ As Asger Ousager has shown, it is important to distinguish *the* Good (the transcendental principle that is said to be “beyond being”) from the *idea* of the Good (which, like other *ideai*, is intelligible and “really real”), which is said to be the offspring of *the* Good; see “Plotinus on the Relationality of Plato’s Good.” *Ancient Philosophy*. Vol. 28 (2008). We will discuss the relation of the *Republic*’s Good to the *Phaedrus*’s Beauty in Ch. 6. Given that Socrates considers the *idea* of the Good as not “the good itself” but “what looks like a child of the good” (506e), and given that Socrates later analogizes the Good’s role with respect to intelligible reality to the sun’s role with respect to visible reality (the sun is “an offspring the good begot in a proportion with itself;” 508b-c), we could think that as the Good is to the Sun, so is the *idea* of the Good to the Sun’s ray. Just as we can never see the Sun itself but only its ray, by which the Sun is present to us even as it transcends us, so we can never “see” the Good itself but only its *idea*, by which the Good is present to us even as it transcends us.

⁷¹ On this point, see Schindler, *Catholicity*, ch. 7, as well as Dionysius, *Divine Names*, IV.3. The Analogy (coupled with the other images) amounts to an extraordinarily terse argument from effects. Since there are good things, there must be a cause of those good things adequate to the task of causing the good things to be what they are. Whatever is in an effect must have been present in the cause, either

known is present in the things known as a consequence of the good, but also existence and being are in them besides as a result of it, although the good isn't being but is still beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power" (509b). As Parmenides had said, "to be is to be intelligible" (or, "the same thing is for thinking and for being," *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, fr. B3; cf. *Republic* 477a); for Plato, being and intelligibility are coordinate with and adequate to each other because they come from the same source, the Good, which is beyond both being and thinking (except insofar as being "the cause of the knowledge and truth, you can understand it to be a thing known;" 508e).⁷²

10. *If the Good is the cause of all, and if causality is understood in the way that premodern Western philosophers tend to understand it, then all that is *is* good, in an analogical, participatory, and derivate way.⁷³ To be *is* to be good; the properties are, as the medievals say, "convertible." Where there is goodness, there is being, and where there is being, there is goodness, for both come from the Good in the Good's self-communication to existents in its "ray" (or *idea*). While the intelligible realities (the forms) are more proximately "illuminated" by and caused by the Good in its self-communication, even the images of the forms that we would ordinarily call "substances" are, indirectly, "illuminated" by and caused by the Good, in and through the sun, which is the "offspring of the good" (508c), responsible, in proportion*

"formally" or "eminently" (in Descartes's language from *Meditations* III), for an effect could not acquire its character except insofar as the cause of that effect itself had that character to give over to the effect. Or in the language of Proclus, "Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively possesses that character which it communicates to the recipients" (*Elements of Theology*, trans. E. R. Dodds [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004], Prop. 18; cf. the *Liber de Causis*, prop. 14). However, the Good is not just responsible for good things, but for all things (or is responsible for all things because all things are good), and this is evident in the *givenness* of things, for the contingent givenness of things comes about, ultimately, out of a generous act (an "overflow," as per *Republic* 508b).

⁷² Likewise, as Plotinus will show, we can speak of the Good in terms of being, so long as we recognize that in doing so, we are using being "analogously," as Aquinas will make much clearer. On this point, see Eric Perl, *Thinking Being*, Chs. 2.7, 4.2, and 5.3.

⁷³ On the distinction between the premodern, "ontological" notion of causality and the modern, "dynamic" notion of causality, see Schindler, *Catholicity*, ch. 6.

to the Good, for enabling vision and becoming in and through its self-communication, its “ray,” just as the Good enables intelligibility and being in and through its self-communication.⁷⁴ All that *is*, in whatever form it *is* (whether being *as* form, itself by itself, or being *as* image of form, or even being *as* image *as* image of form, as in the case of shadows and reflections), is good, but in proportion to its proximity to or mediated distance from the cause of its existence. In other words, insofar as the Good transcends all things by being “beyond being” (*epekeina tēs ousias*, 509b) as the cause of all, one can, in a certain respect, never “see” the Good, for it is beyond knowledge (except insofar as it’s the cause of knowledge, and we can know it as such, as at 508e). But what’s arguably more important—and all the more important insofar as the point is so frequently missed—is the converse: by being transcendent to all, the Good is *immanent* to all in its self-communication (its *idea*, its “ray”); accordingly, though we can never “see” the Good on account of its transcendence, we can also *never not see* the Good on account of its immanence.⁷⁵ Every *thing*, every experience, is an experience of the Good (even if we experience the Good in different degrees of clarity and obscurity through the four “affections” discussed in the Divided Line; cf. 511d-e).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ This point is also indicated by Socrates’s specification of the layout of the cave: “See human beings as though they were in an underground cave-like dwelling with its entrance, a long one, open to the light across the whole width of the cave” (*Republic* 514a). The “mouth” of the cave corresponds to the primary division in the Divided Line between the intelligible and perceptual. If the mouth is “open to the light across the whole width,” we are invited to recognize that the light of the Good is present even in the darkest reaches of the cave.

⁷⁵ See also McCoy, *Image and Argument*, Ch. 7. The significance of the metaphor of light for this point is clearly articulated in Schindler, “‘Unless You Become a Philosopher ...’: On God, Being, and Reason’s Role in Faith,” *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2016), 96-97.

⁷⁶ On the logic of the relationship between immanence and transcendence of the source of all (whether specified as the Good, the One, Beauty Itself, or God), see Perl, *Thinking Being*, Ch. 4.4, and Gary Gurtler, “Plotinus: Omnipresence and Transcendence of the One in VI 5 [23],” *Reading Ancient Texts. Volume II: Aristotle and Neoplatonism*, eds. Suzanne Stern-Gillet and Kevin Corrigan (Boston: Brill, 2007). We’ll see in Ch. 6 that a similar set of remarks holds for the *Phaedrus*’s Beauty as well.

11. Hence, evil doesn't have independent existence, for the Good is the only thing that can give *being* and *essence* to what is, and "that which does no evil would not be the cause of any evil" (379b; cf. 391e). There are no *per se* evil beings, and there are no *per se* evil natures. While there are evil inclinations, dispositions, and actions (namely, those by which something acts contrary to its nature), these inclinations, dispositions, and actions are not caused by the good, for the good "is not responsible for the bad things" (397b-c);⁷⁷ rather, they are caused by something's failure to be itself (evil would in this sense be a "privation" of what should be present, and so would thus have the metaphysical character of an accident rather than substance or essence). Something fails to be itself when it fails to pursue the good as wholly as possible (through its natural mode) by idolatrously elevating a partial good over a less partial good or over the Good itself.⁷⁸ If something persists in following a reality-resistant inclination,

⁷⁷ 397b-c may seem to imply that there are bad *entities* which must be caused by something since they are not caused by the good; accordingly, it would seem like there must be a positive cause of evil (something which would seem to be inconsistent with the account of the Good as the cause of all in *Republic VI*). We should note, however, that the remarks at 397b-c may be in some sense "imprecise" insofar as Socrates prefaces his discussion of the *idea* of the Good in *Republic VI* by saying that "in order to get the finest possible look at these things another and longer road around would be required" and that "the statements made at that time were, as it looks to me, deficient in precision" since we had not yet come to an adequate measure, for "a measure in such things, which in any way falls short of that which *is*, is no measure at all. For nothing incomplete is the measure of anything" (504b-c). These remarks in *Republic VI* invite us to review what was discussed in the prior books in light of the newly discussed *idea* of the Good; in doing so, we may come to better recognize what was "imprecisely said" in the prior books, such as when Socrates says "of the bad things, some other causes must be sought and not the good" (379c). This statement is not false, but it is somewhat imprecise since "bad things" could be taken to mean bad *entities*, things which are intrinsically bad (which do not exist in Plato's universe). We'll return to this point below.

⁷⁸ It is particularly difficult to determine a consistent teaching on evil from the dialogues for a number of reasons. As C. M. Chilcott, one of the earliest modern interpreters to systematically consider the place of evil in Plato's corpus, puts it: "Plato nowhere deals systematically with the problem of the origin of evil. And yet no system of philosophy which proposes to explain the mysteries of existence can leave untouched the undeniable and perplexing fact of warps and imperfections in the fabric of our life, seemingly inherent in the very tissue of which it is woven. It is difficult to believe that Plato could shape his scheme without taking this into account—somewhere, one feels, he must offer an explanation" ("The Platonic Theory of Evil," *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 [1923], 27). Rather than a single systematic account of evil, Plato instead refers to evil occasionally throughout his corpus, and there are only a few loci wherein the topic gets sustained treatment (especially *Laws X*, the *Timaeus*, and the myth in the *Statesman*). These and other texts seem to present contrasting accounts of the metaphysical source of evil (does evil come from matter, as many readers of the *Timaeus* suppose? Does evil come from an

that inclination becomes habitual, perhaps even compulsory, such that one could speak with some sense of an “evil soul” (a soul, that is, who is evil by disposition, if not evil in its *being*; cf. 395d).⁷⁹ While Plato not infrequently seems to suggest that materiality or bodiliness are

intrinsically evil soul, thereby showing Plato to be some kind of proto-Gnostic, as *Laws X* suggests? Does evil come from the disordered motions of human souls, as the *Phaedrus* might be taken to suggest? Is there no positive source of evil, as later Platonists suggest?). There is a sizable literature on this topic into which we cannot wade in the present context. Instead, we’ll just refer to some texts and literature that show why the account of evil I’ve drawn from the *Republic’s* account of the good holds for Plato.

The brief account I give of evil here, may seem sufficiently similar to the later accounts given by both pagan and Christian Neoplatonists as to warrant a charge of imposition. While I admit that the later Neoplatonist account of topics like evil is in many ways clearer and more worked-out than is Plato’s more germinal account, and so some aspects of the Neoplatonist account is not found in Plato to the letter, nevertheless the principles from which the later Neoplatonists draw their account are genuinely Platonic and can be found in the dialogues, as can some of the implications of those principles. In “A Journey to the Dark Side of the Moon: Metaphysical and Moral Aspects of Evil in Plato’s *Philebus*,” *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2009), James Wood argues that a conception of evil similar to that of Augustine can be found in Plato (135). Augustine argues that “Evil necessarily lacks its own independent reality, its own *archē*, since God is the source of all being and goodness. Evil is for this reason often conceived of as a sort of lack or privation of being and goodness. At the same time, in its opposition to God, evil is seen as rebellious and destructive, and so is not merely the absence of good but the willful turning away from it. On this conception, in short, evil subverts and destroys being and goodness, even as it remains ultimately subordinate to them and to their source in God” (134-135). Wood argues that on the basis of the *Philebus’s* analysis of the unlimited (*apeiron*) as “always necessarily subject to what is limited [*peras* ...] an independent power or principle of evil is shown to be a metaphysical impossibility” (136); cf. *Philebus* 23d (where *diakrisis* should be interpreted, according to Wood, as “dissolution” rather than “discrimination”).

In his more wide-ranging study, “Is There an *Archē Kakou* in Plato?” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2009), Wood argues that what he discerned in the *Philebus* is also available on the basis of the *Republic*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Laws*: “In a strict sense there is no metaphysical or divine evil in Plato, because evil metaphysically conceived reduces to pure negativity or indeterminacy, which as such lacks independent reality. The various concepts that are posited as competing principles of evil in Plato (matter, nonbeing, difference, indeterminacy) will be shown in the light of their relationship to being and goodness to be essentially commensurable aspects of the generative order of the good. It is only on an ethical level that evil acquires positive reality, and there only by the conjunction of the negativity in human nature with the decision to submit to it” (349-350). In other words, there is nothing that is evil *per se*—no intrinsically evil being, no evil essence, no Evil—but instead there is only evil as privation (a “negative” rather than “positive” evil, for it does not exist *per se* but only on account of x’s failing to be what it is) and moral evil (what happens when an individual soul chooses to act contrary to its nature). Chilcott concurs (“Platonic Theory of Evil”), as do Harold Cherniss (“The Sources of Evil According to Plato,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 98, No. 1 [1954]) and Richard Mohr (“Plato’s Final Thoughts on Evil: *Laws X*. 899-905,” *Mind*, Vol. 87, No. 348 [1978]).

⁷⁹ On this point, see, e.g., Gabriela Roxana Carone, “Teleology and Evil in *Laws 10*,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1994), esp. 288-298 where Carone shows that the references to “evil souls” (references which might lead one to think that the Athenian Stranger is setting up a kind of Gnostic dualism wherein the world is governed by equal and opposing principles of good and evil) are restricted to human souls who alone have the responsibility for choosing to cooperate with the providential order. To be evil is to fail morally to cooperate, something that is contingent on choice, not nature. This also explains what the Athenian Stranger means when he says that the heavens (understood more broadly as

evils (or, at least, the source of evils) from which we must escape, the logic of Plato's understanding of causality indicates that neither materiality nor bodies can be evil by nature; rather, it is evil for us to *prefer* materiality and bodily things, which are the most distant and dull reflection of the Good, to the Good itself.⁸⁰ Likewise, when Socrates says in the *Theaetetus* that "it's not possible for evils to be done away with, Theodorus, since it's necessary that there always be something contrary to what's good" (176a),⁸¹ he does not mean to set up an evil principle equiprimordial to the good as if in a form of proto-Gnosticism but instead indicates that since all that comes from the Good is not itself the Good, there must always be a "falling short" aspect of reality.⁸² Evil occurs in the *inclination* and the misdirection of our love, not in the object of our love. Nothing *is* evil, but things *become* evil when we prefer, idolatrously,

the whole world, including the human sphere) are more full of evils than goods (*Laws* 906a); the "evils" are evilly-turned human souls, not *per se* evil souls or evil gods.

⁸⁰ At *Phaedrus* 250c, Socrates says that while following Zeus to the superheavenly place, "we were ourselves pure and unmarked by what we now carry around and call a body, a thing which imprisons us like an oyster shell." It's noteworthy that the image itself resists the notion that the body is evil, for an oyster's shell exists precisely to *protect* the oyster, even if, in the act of protection, it does limit the oyster's motion. Evil doesn't come from bodily nature *qua* bodily, but from pleasure-lust, which is what "enables viciousness to enter the soul" (256b). Bodily existence may be a necessary condition for pleasure-lust, but it is not sufficient to bring about vice; indeed, vice is a possibility for the soul before it is incarnate. See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 104 and Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 78. See also the excellent clarification of the issue with respect to the *Phaedo* given by Russel Jones and Patricia Marechal in "Plato's Guide to Living With Your Body," *Philosophy of Mind in Antiquity*, Vol. 1 (2018), who argue that even in the *Phaedo*, the message is not one of disdain for the body but instead for a realist recognition of the ways in which the body can present obstacles (especially when absolutized) to the soul's flourishing; on this, see also Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, ch. 6.1. On the way in which the apparent "anti-body" and "anti-sense" tendencies in Plato and other premodern figures actually showcase a deep respect for the body and the senses, see Schindler, *Catholicity*, ch. 5.

⁸¹ Citations of the *Theaetetus* come from Joe Sachs's translations (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2004).

⁸² On this, see Viktor Ilievski, "Traces of the Platonic Theory of Evil in the *Theaetetus*," *Journal of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2017). Cf. Cherniss, "Sources of Evil," 24: "Since no copy or reflection can be identical with its model or original, all phenomena must fall short of the reality of the ideas, and all must therefore be something less than perfect. So all the phenomenal world is always involved in what may be called 'negative evil,' since it is a derogation of reality, the degree of deviation from the original which at the very least is implied in the existence of a copy or reflection. It is evil in this sense that, as the contrary of good, is in the *Theaetetus* said to be ineradicable from this mortal world but absent from the divine." While the "falling short" aspect of the image—which is the kind of being all of the beings of our experience have—is intrinsic to all images, there is also an "additive" dimension to be discussed in Ch. 6.

particular goods to the whole good, as when the wanton horse pulls the soul toward the pursuit of pleasure *at the expense of* the soul's apprehension of or recollection of the truth.

12. Corruption, then, is not to be found *simply* in the soul's pursuit of pleasure, for pleasure is a good (as indicated by the fact that the divine souls feed their horses after making the ascent; cf. 247e); corruption instead lies in the soul's exclusive preference for pleasure at the expense of greater, more satisfying goods. But the corrupt soul *is* chasing after a genuine good; it is not chasing after evil *per se*, even if its pursuit is evil in that it chases after a genuine good foolishly, shortsightedly, self-damagingly, and in a way that damages the beloved (as discussed in Ch. 2 above).⁸³ As Diotima says, "Love is about neither half nor whole, unless, my comrade, it happened to be somehow good" (*Symposium* 205e; cf. *Phaedrus* 237c). The corrupt *do* love the good; they can't help but love the good (cf. *Republic* 505d-e).⁸⁴ They do so inadequately, even self-damagingly, yet they love the good, *for there is nothing else to love*, since the Good is the source of all and is present in all.⁸⁵ Even the most corrupt person—the tyrant—loves the Good, albeit in the most disordered way.

⁸³ This is another way of putting the common Platonic point that no one does evil knowingly. Cf. *Protagoras* 345d-e, 358b-d, *Meno* 77b-e, *Gorgias* 509e, *Republic* 505d, *Sophist* 228c-d, *Laws* 731c-d.

⁸⁴ As Gerson explains, "'good' and 'good for me' are necessarily identical, where the words 'for me' are purely indexical. That is, 'good' and 'good for anyone' are identical (*From Plato to Platonism*, 43); cf. *Republic* 412d.

⁸⁵ Augustine, who gives the Platonic understanding of ordered and disordered desire its classical expression, notes an important implication of corrupt desire. Since corruption isn't in the object desired but in the soul's relation to the object desired by desiring that option in a disordered way, it is possible to love even the highest goods corruptly. As Augustine says in *City of God* (in *Political Writings*, trans. Michael Tkacz and Douglas Kries [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994], XIV.5, "There is no need to blame the nature of the flesh for our sins and defects and in so doing wrong the creator, because within its own kind and order the flesh is good. It is not good, however, to live according to a created good by turning our backs on the goodness of the creator. [...] Thus, he who praises the nature of the soul as the highest good and condemns the nature of the flesh as evil loves the soul in a carnal way and flees the flesh in a carnal way, for this view is based on human vanity not divine truth. Indeed, unlike the Manichaeans, the Platonists do not despise the nature of the earthly body as evil, because they attribute to God the creator all the elements of which this visible and tangible world is composed, and their qualities." In XIV.4, Augustine clarifies Paul's distinction between "carnal" and "spiritual" (see, e.g., 1

§3.3. Return: The Healing of the Corrupt Soul

13. Because the corrupt love the Good—albeit, corruptly—they are, in an inadequate way, responding to the Good’s *call*, and because they are doing so, it is possible that there will be an “opening up,” which can lead to a soul’s healing.⁸⁶ Since corrupt desire still desires

Corinthians 3:3) as a distinction between two modes of directing oneself (living “according to”) rather than as a distinction between two substances (one of which being a good object of love, the other of which being an evil object of love). A “carnal” love is *not* a love of the flesh, but, instead, a love of *whatever* one loves in a mode that is “according” to the flesh, i.e., idolatrous. One can have a spiritual love of one’s bodily existence, and one can have a carnal love of one’s soul (indeed, one can have a carnal love of God himself if one makes God a means to one’s lower-ordered desires). I suggest that in drawing distinctions in the way that Augustine does, Augustine is true to *both* Paul *and* Plato, for both sources recognize that *all* of reality is good but not equally good, and that the act of love requires careful discernment of the order of desire.

⁸⁶ In what sense does the Good *call* us? Given that the Good seems to be an impersonal principle of existence, to speak of the Good as calling us would seem to be either an imposition of personal characteristics onto something impersonal which couldn’t bear those characteristics or a metaphorical use of language that could possibly serve to obscure just as much as reveal the point being made thereby given the possibility of the aforementioned imposition. We will develop the sense in which the language of “calling” is apt and not merely metaphorical in Ch. 6, but a few preliminary remarks are warranted. Given that the gods, represented as persons, both care for us (246e) and lead us (247a) to really real reality, there’s a sense in which the language of “calling” would be apt, at least with respect to the gods (if not really real reality itself; though elsewhere Plato seems to refer to the highest metaphysical principles with the personal language of “Lord” and “Father;” cf. VI.322c, *Timaeus* 28a, 37c. *Laws* 716c even speaks of God, the measure of all things, as loving those who are good; cf. McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 198). The gods lead us especially to Beauty, which we might say calls us to look at it. Not only does phenomenal beauty tend to arrest our vision and draw us into attending to it, but, further, Beauty itself calls us to itself *through* its phenomenal images, as we’ll discuss in Chs. 4 and 6. It does so by “startling” us (250a, 254b).

Nevertheless, it may seem like an interpolation of the later Platonic tradition to think of the Good as “calling” us to itself, insofar as the act of “calling” would seem to imply personhood and insofar as one suspects that an attribution of personhood (or, at least, a personal dimension) to the Good is something which is foreign to the pagan philosophical tradition, which took great pains to de-anthropomorphize the poetic tradition’s understanding of the divine. If so, it would indeed be improper, or at least anachronistic, to point to a text, such as Dionysius’s *Divine Names* 701c-d, which speaks of the Good, the cause of all, as being aptly named Beauty, for “Beauty ‘bids’ [*ho kallos kalei*] all things to itself (whence it is called ‘beauty’) and gathers everything into itself” (*Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987]; cf. Hermias, *Scholia*, 14.9-14).

However, the anachronism charge begins to lose its force once we recognize that this is an allusion to *Cratylus* 416b-c, wherein Socrates etymologizes “the beautiful” (*to kalón*) as having undergone a change in the length of its omicron and in its accent from “the calling one” (*to kaloûn*). Socrates suggests, and Hermogenes agrees, that “that which continues to call things by name [*to kaloun*] [is] the same power that once called [*kalesan*] them by name, namely thinking.” It might be argued that this etymology is unserious, as many have argued more generally with respect to the *Cratylus* etymologies, but, minimally, it shows that the idea occurred to Plato (and, I’d suggest, was probably a ready association on account of the aural similarities of *kalon* and *kalein*; the two words also share forms on occasion, such as *kalou*, the genitive of *kalon* and the present imperative of *kalein*).

something genuinely (if incompletely) good, the soul's corrupt desire can be an occasion for healing, *if* the soul *listens* to the Good's call in and through the enjoyment of this particular good. Again, the soul can't be healed without changing its relation to the goods that it seeks, but even in corruptly seeking those goods, it is given the opportunity to change its relation to those goods (even if, unfortunately, many souls will not take advantage of this opportunity).

14. The opportunity for the corrupt to transform her relation to the object of her desire can come about in two ways. First it can come in the form of another person's mediation, as when Diotima refers to a "guide guiding correctly," wherein a guide shows the pleasure-pursuer that there are other and greater goods to pursue. Alternatively, the guidance by which one's relationship to the good desired can be transformed can come from the thing itself, in two ways (positively and negatively). First, the corrupt are presented the occasion for healing in the experience of dissatisfaction, for a soul which pursues an incomplete good *as if* that good were all that is required for the satiation of the soul's desire often recognizes upon obtaining the object of its desire that it is still "hungry."⁸⁷ That dissatisfaction or lack of

⁸⁷ Roochnik reads Diotima's account of the "ladder of love" as a "phenomenology of dissatisfied desire" in *Tragedy of Reason*, chapter 2, section B. While the erotic ascent can be profitably read as motivated by a desire that continues to be dissatisfied with each partial good, I part ways with the conclusion Roochnik draws from his reading of the *Symposium*, for Roochnik claims that this "phenomenology" can't tell us anything secure about human nature, the nature of human desire, or the objects of human desire; it does not, Roochnik claims, constitute a "transcendental argument" for Beauty Itself, but instead, only discloses that certain souls *just so happen* to have a desire that isn't satiated by anything less than Beauty Itself (whether or not such a thing exists). By contrast, Fussi reads the "feast and banquet" at the summit of the erotic ascent in the *Palinode* as "more like the response to a call than like an action taken from the necessity of spiritual hunger" ("As the Wolf Loves the Lamb," 54). While Fussi is right to understand our relationship to the true beings in the superheavenly place as a "call" to which we respond, Fussi is, I think, wrong to see 'desire as response to call' as incompatible with 'desire as spiritual hunger.' In other words, as I'll go on to discuss, *both* aspects of desire (the hunger, lack, and desire for satiety aspect, and the Levinasian "metaphysical desire" aspect to which Fussi refers) are necessary. By contrast to both Roochnik's dissatisfied desire and Fussi's non-hungry "metaphysical desire," Schindler argues for a reading of Diotima's account as what we might call a "phenomenology of ever-more-satisfied desire." We are impelled upward not out of frustration with the imperfection of *this* beauty here, but instead by our amazement with *this* beauty here, which draws us—positively rather than negatively—to look further. See "Disclosing Beauty: On Order and Disorder in Plato's *Symposium*," *Beauty and the Good: Recovering the*

satiation leads the desirous soul to seek out an object of desire more adequate to its desire. If one listens to one's experience of dissatisfaction, one will make the "erotic ascent" described in the *Symposium*, regardless of whether or not there is a human or divine guide to guide one in the process, for the guidance of a guide is *nothing other than* an auxiliary to the proper function of human nature (as we'll see in Ch. 4). Socrates, after all, claims not to *teach* (neither in the sense of putting mental contents into the minds of another, as per *Symposium* 175c-e, nor in the sense of restoring a broken capacity, as per *Republic* 518b-d), but to redirect one's naturally adequate capacity away from images (which will always fail to satisfy when pursued single-mindedly) to that which they image (which will always fully satisfy when pursued fully), so that one can recognize images *as* images and cease to be arrested by the images, as the prisoners in the Cave are. Further, Socrates claims not to transmit mental contents but to *remove* impediments to the natural function of our rational capacity (see *Apology* 23b) and to help those who are beset by impediments and confusions to "bear" what they have within them, as per the midwifery analogy (see especially *Theaetetus* 150d). Unlike Protagoras, who administers speech-drugs to manipulate the way in which appearances appear to them (see *Theaetetus* 166e-167b), Socratic therapy is a redirection of the soul to the proper course of nature. Again, Socratic therapy is an *auxiliary* to what is already present and possible for the corrupt soul, if only it will listen to the part of itself that is by nature "hegemonic" rather than allow itself to remain in civil war. Since our desires for proximate goods, like pleasure, are more immediate and insistent than our desire for ultimate goods, we often need help in setting our course straight; but, strictly speaking, no one can set that course straight for us except

Classical Tradition from Plato to Duns Scotus, ed. Alice M. Ramos (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 40-41. As I will argue in Ch. 4, what Schindler sees in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* takes place at the *exact center* of the *Phaedrus*.

ourselves, and our course will not be set straight unless and until we take up the task for ourselves.

15. In addition to the negative mode of dissatisfaction, the thing itself can guide the corrupt beyond corruption, positively, through the corrupted soul's incipient experiences of concern and care, as we shall see in the next chapter. The "dissatisfied desire" reading of the erotic ascent, while valuable and accurate, is incomplete, for, in fact, one only loves a beloved well when one loves the beloved out of genuine concern for the beloved's well-being. While dissatisfaction is sufficient to "drag" us up, away from the inadequacy of, for example, the beauty of a particular body, it is not necessary that we need to experience dissatisfaction with the particular beloved in order to be pulled past the particular beloved to that which is more adequate to our desire. *If* one wants to love a beloved well, one needs to determine how to do so, and an essential part of loving a beloved well is to recognize that the particular beloved is *not* the whole of reality. Loving care requires taking the particular beloved off a pedestal and changing one's relationship to the beloved from one of idolatry, out of concern for the *beloved's* well-being. In other words, if I want to love a particular beloved well, I have to come to an awareness that the particular beloved is *not* the whole good, and in the process of coming to this awareness, I will seek out the whole good *so that* I can better appreciate the individual beloved *for who she is*. This is another way of saying what has already been said—we will never know the just and fair things *adequately* until we recognize the Good. Idolatrous love can open into genuine love, and so the corrupt *can* (though by no means certainly *will*) provide the occasion for a soul's healing, such that it can recollect.

16. Note further that Socrates's general statement of the initial effects of the beautiful beloved on the lover seem to prescind from the distinction between the corrupt and initiate.

“So, whenever (*hotan*) a soul looks at a boy’s beauty she is watered and warmed from this as she takes in these in-flowing and invading draughts (*mere*) of beauty—that’s why it’s called ‘desire’ (*bimeros*). This causes both a relief from pain and a feeling of joy” (251c-d). The beloved’s beauty “waters and warms” the lover’s soul, providing the conditions under which its wings may sprout anew, by the natural power of which it would be carried aloft and back (*agein anō*) to the Plain of Truth (246d).⁸⁸ We frequently do begin our relationships inadequately—in lust, as a means to use or pleasure, etc.—but something genuine can, over time, emerge from these inadequate beginnings, because that something genuine is *real* and makes a claim on us, and, in doing so, presents us the opportunity to recognize relative goods as relative.⁸⁹ The divinely-mad lover, as we shall later see, does *not* immediately relate to his beloved well and can only do so after making contact with the god whom he followed through memory.⁹⁰

17. The fact that we aren’t immediately conveyed to Beauty by the beauty of the beloved doesn’t mean we won’t eventually get there, especially if we have some help redirecting our thinking and desires along the way. Indeed, near the end of the Palinode, Socrates describes a pair of lovers who have managed to enslave “what enables viciousness to enter the soul”—the wanton horse—and to liberate “what allows excellence access” (256b).

⁸⁸ See note 97 to Ch. 2. Augustine perfectly captures the simultaneously immanent and transcendent character of that *toward which* we are led when we *anagei anō* when he says of God, “You were more intimately present to me than my innermost being, and higher than the highest peak of my spirit” (Confessions, trans. Maria Boulding [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008], III.6.11).

⁸⁹ This is why we need love to be guided by a suitable guide (*Symposium* 210a); we need to learn to love well. One of the most significant lessons we must learn in love’s curriculum is to recognize the distinction between absolutes (Beauty Itself) and relatives (this beautiful body, this beautiful law), and to love each accordingly (i.e., love the absolute as absolute and love the relative as relative), for, if we fail to do so, we make idols out of relative goods (and thereby damage both the beloved and ourselves, as we saw in Ch. 2), and neglect that which is most loveable in the process. On the metaphysics of absolutes and relatives (and why we need not take the choice as an either/or, as many commentators), see especially Schindler, “Plato and the Problem of Love: On the Nature of *Eros* in the *Symposium*,” *Apeiron*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2007).

⁹⁰ Cf. Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 71.

Whether this happens after the first go-round is a matter of our choices and life-conduct (as we'll discuss below). But even if we don't choose perfectly, this life might situate us for choosing better in the next life:

In death, their souls are wingless, and yet they are eager to sprout feathers as they leave their bodies, so that actually they have not carried off a small prize for their erotic madness. *It is the law for those who have already begun their journey in lower heaven that they shall not return to the dark path under the earth, but shall lead a bright life (phanon bion diagontas) in blessed journeys with each other, and from their love shall grow, in due time, common plumage.* (256d-e; emphasis added)

The “quickly” qualification, then, gives us a warrant for relativizing any absolute distinctions between the recently initiated and the corrupt, and this shouldn't surprise us, for the corrupt are what they are largely on account of having not been *recently* initiated, such that the truth is not *palpable* for them. But, as the Palinode frequently belabors, there are *no* human beings who haven't been initiated. All humans have been initiated, but they operate in each life at different levels of remove from that initiation.

§4. Distinction 1, Continued: Humanity, Divinity, Fidelity

§4.1. Locating the Source of Human Limitation

1. That even the corrupt can be conveyed by beautiful images to Beauty is further suggested by the criterion by which Socrates distinguishes human souls from non-human mortal souls. While human souls can inhabit animal bodies, animal souls cannot inhabit human bodies, for “only a soul which has seen (*idousa*) the truth can enter into our human form” (249b). “For it is necessary (*dei*) that a human being understand (*sunienai*, or “come to be together with”), according to form (*kat' eidos*), what is said, going from many perceptions into one (*eis hen*) gathered together by reasoning” (i.e., recollection, which proceeds by the correct handling of reminders; 249b-c, my translation). All human beings, by nature, can recollect, because all humans, by nature, have seen “the truth,” without qualification: “And, as we have

said, by our very nature (*phusei*) every (*pasa*) human soul has already viewed (*tetheatai*) the things which are; or else she wouldn't have come into this life form" (249e-250a). To be human *simply* *is* to have "seen" the true beings. Even the corrupt have already seen the truth; otherwise they wouldn't be in the human form.⁹¹

2. The distinctions in the degrees to which human souls have seen the truth are all subordinate to the more governing distinction between human souls, non-human mortal souls, and divine souls. What is proper to the human soul is having seen the truth, on account of which the human soul is able to be transported (back) to the truth through reasoning. Other mortal souls have not, by implication, seen the truth (and are thus absolutely distinct from human souls, despite our capacity to enter their form). The gods, by contrast, are perfectly capable of making the ascent and thus have as adequate as possible a view of the truth (and are thus distinguished from human souls in terms of the degree of adequacy with which gods

⁹¹ On this, see Nicholson, "The Ontology of Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Dionysius*, Vol. 16 (1998), 21-22: "Though mortal vision is partial and subject to chaotic interruptions, that which they have seen is equal to what the gods have seen. Though their seeing is partial, that which they see has no parts and no temporal phases. If you have seen justice itself at all, then you have seen all of it." See also Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 223-224. One might object that at 248a, Socrates contrasts the non-divine souls with the divine because while the divine enjoy an unhindered sight of what's beyond the heavens, even the soul which most closely cleaves to the pattern set up by the gods will get "confused by the horses" and will be "scarcely able to gaze (*mogis kathorōsa*) upon the things that are," or, in the language commentators frequently adopt, non-divine souls only get a "glimpse" and thus can't (yet) be said to fully enjoy a vision of the beings. Part of the ambiguity is in the prefix *kath-* (*kata-*), which can either mean "downward" or "thoroughly." The spatial sense (used of the Cicadas at 259a) doesn't fit well with the context, since the spatial metaphor already being used is "outside" (the souls are looking out beyond the heavens; *exō*). If the prefix indicates thoroughness (as when *kathoran* means to see distinctly, as at *Republic* 516a), then we have a bit of a surprising combination, since *mogis* (scarcely) would limit while *kata-* would intensify; however, given that "scarcely" is not the original sense of *mogis*, the interpretation of this point might be resolved by looking back to the original sense of *mogis*: toilsome, laborious (whereby we get the ordinary sense of "scarcely" on account of the fact that we are unlikely to be able to perform completely a labor that is particularly toilsome). This sense is preserved in the related terms *mogos* (toil) and *mogein* (to toil). If *mogis* can be taken in its original sense, *mogis kathorōsa* could be translated as something like "gets a thorough look only with much labor." This rendering of *mogis kathoran* conforms with the use of *kathoran* at 247d just prior, where it is used to describe how the gods thoroughly see one form, then another, then another, as well as with the verbs used later on to describe the soul's vision of the forms, for neither *kathoran*, nor *idein*, nor *theamai* imply a limited view.

and human souls see the truth).⁹² Even the worst of human beings—the tyrant—has seen the truth, though his memory thereof is dimmest, and even the best of human beings—the philosopher—was not perfectly initiated (248b).⁹³

3. Consideration of why even the philosopher was not perfectly initiated will help clarify why the distinction between the philosopher (or recently initiated) and the non-philosopher (or corrupt) is a matter of degree (how quickly and easily a soul may recollect) rather than kind. Socrates makes two claims about the soul's initiation into the mysteries of the superheavenly truth which seem to be in tension (if not in contradiction). First, after describing the ways in which the horses of non-divine souls trample each other in their attempt to follow the divine souls up (*anō hepontai*), Socrates claims: “In spite of this great effort, all souls (*pasai*), everyone of them, leave the sight of Being, unfulfilled (*ateleis*; alternatively,

⁹² Commentators are somewhat divided on how they parse the distinction between the divine and human souls. The *Phaedrus* seems to indicate that we are *essentially* the same thing, except insofar as the gods have purely good and obedient motive capacities (horses), whereas human beings have difficulties with their desire for pleasure. Hyland, for example, draws a stark contrast between the gods, who are eternal, wise, purely noetic, nonlinguistic, and unerotic, whereas humans are temporal, non-wise, only momentarily noetic, linguistic, and erotic beings (*Question of Beauty*, 76-77; cf. Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 56). White, conversely, claims that divine souls are to be distinguished from human souls *only* in the perfection of their orientation to the true beings (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 122); the distinction between the divine and human is more a matter of degree than kind (*ibid.*, 123), even if the divine perfection presents an asymptotic limit for us. White's way of parsing the distinction is, I think, to be preferred, for a number of reasons. First, it much better coheres with Plato's notion of divinization (*homoīōsis theōi*); if the gods are utterly distinct, even “alien” to us (as per Burger), then there is no becoming like them. Further, though the gods are eternal, so are human souls (though human souls go through the life cycles, whereas the gods do not). Additionally, the gods, though wise, are not exactly self-sufficient, for they too make the journey to be nourished by what they see in the Plain of Truth. One could say they are self-sufficient in all other respects except insofar as they are *ontologically dependent*; in this sense, they too seem to be qualifiedly erotic. Further still, though the point that the gods don't need language is well-taken, the dialogue *does* present the gods as speaking (particularly in the myth of the creation of writing); at most, we might be able to say that they, unlike us, don't *need logos* to apprehend Being. White gives good metaphysical grounds for recognizing the gods and human beings as not wholly diverse, for both are, at heart, souls in whom the intellectual capacity is (or should be) predominant. The gods are perfect within their category, but not absolutely, for they are still *derivatively* real compared to the forms, the true beings (*ibid.*, 98). They are what they are on account of their receptivity rather than through a self-sufficient activity, and they even exhibit some insufficiency (for they need to be *carried* around the periphery of the heavens by “really real reality;” *ibid.*, 103, 105).

⁹³ On the tyrant's partial (albeit least adequate) vision of truth, see White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 116.

“uninitiated”),⁹⁴ and, once departed, feed on the food of conjecture” (248b). Only a page later, Socrates claims that the one who “correctly handles such reminders” can be “perpetually initiated into these perfect mysteries (*teleous aei teletas teloumenos*)” and is “truly perfect (*teleos*)” (249c). How could one be “perpetually initiated” if one left the sight of being “uninitiated?”

4. This tension can only be satisfactorily resolved, I claim, by situating it within an adequate appraisal of the dialogue’s anthropological and ontological claims. The human capacity to apprehend and know the true beings is limited, but how we specify those limitations dramatically inflects our interpretation of the dialogue. Whence comes the limitation? Necessarily, any limitation reflects the nature of the “fit” between the knowing mind and the reality to be known. The character of this fit is determined both by the nature of the mind, the nature of reality, and the degree to which the human mind can be made adequate to reality (if, that is, reality itself is intelligible). If reality “is” such a sort as not to be intelligible on account of its lack of structure, then no mind will ever be adequate to it. If however, reality is intelligible, it is possible that different kinds of minds will be more or less adequate to its intelligibility according to their capacities. We might put the question this way: Do all souls *fail* to be initiated in the sight of Being because of what they *are* or because of what Being *is*?⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Ateleis* can mean either “unfulfilled” in the sense of being insufficiently nourished, or *ateleis* can mean being “uninitiated” in the sense of not having been (adequately) brought into the mysteries of a religious tradition. Both senses are suggested by the context: 249b-c’s reference to the soul’s reasoning capacity and “wing” being nourished by what they see in the “Plain of Truth” suggests nourishment, and 247c’s reference to the inadequacy of every hymn to the “the truth of Being, the Being that truly is” is suggestive of the mysteries. As we will go on to discuss in the remaining chapters, we need to be careful about the “finality” of this statement about unfulfillment/uninitiation, for one might be tempted to take it as a statement of the necessary partiality and failure of the soul’s ascent on account of human limitation rather than as a statement of the inexhaustibility and “ever-more-ness” of Being, into which the soul is called to enter ever more deeply.

⁹⁵ Given that I’ve just said that the intelligibility relationship has to do with the “fit” between the two terms (mind and Being), it might seem odd to rephrase the question in terms of the different sides of the relationship. Nevertheless, there is heuristic value in doing so. “Intelligibility” can never be an absolute term; rather, what is intelligible is intelligible *to* something, even though we frequently suppress the

5. As Socrates says in a number of places, the divine is neither jealous nor envious; rather, it is fundamentally *generous*. As we've already seen, the gods grant divine mania "for our greatest good fortune" (245c). The divine is "beautiful, wise, good, and everything of this sort" (246e), and the divine "arranges everything thoroughly and tak[es] care of it" (246e).⁹⁶ Since the gods are just (for "each of the gods attend[s] to his own business;" 247a), and "since Envy (*phthonos*) stands outside the space of the divine dance," "whoever is willing and able can follow behind" (*hepetai de ho aei ethelōn te kai dunamenos*; 247a). The ability of human beings to follow behind the gods in their ascent to the superheavenly place is qualified a number of times, for despite their eagerness to follow, the non-divine souls "can barely follow" (247b) and "lack the means" (248a). Clearly, the divine is not *keeping* anyone at bay; "really real reality" has not erected any barriers meant to keep human souls away, as, perhaps, the older mythological presentation of the Olympians might do for fear of invasion (as in Aristophanes's story of Zeus's punishment of the "circle people" for making an "attempt upon the gods;" see *Symposium* 190b-191d).

dative on account of presupposing a fixed referent (we, generally speaking, care about what's intelligible *to humans* rather than to something else). The only way we could meaningfully speak of intelligibility *simpliciter* would be if we were really speaking of intelligibility *to* a perfectly adequate mind (i.e., God). If there is such a mind, then we could meaningfully speak of other beings' capacity to understand what the perfect intellect understands in terms of the limitations or adequacy of the subject (for Being, in that sense, is intelligible, but not to all beings on account of the fact that they aren't properly equipped for understanding Being absolutely). Likewise, asking whether our limitation with respect to knowing Being has to do with the nature of Being itself is heuristically valuable because it forces us to consider more precisely the character of Being (as we begin to do in the next paragraph) on account of which the (human) mind is unable to grasp it (is it that Being is basically unintelligible? That being "withdraws" from us? Or, as I shall argue, that Being is characterized as always being "ever more," such that the mind can never exhaust Being even as it comes to understand Being?).

⁹⁶ Strikingly, both Griswold and Benardete somehow conclude that the gods don't care for human souls, despite Socrates's claim that Zeus cares for *everything*. See Benardete, *Rhetoric of Morality*, 137, 140, and especially Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 87: "The myth teaches that we are on our own; we cannot beseech heaven for relief from our miseries, forgiveness for our sins, answers to our questions."

6. If the divine, in its non-envy, is not keeping anyone at bay, and if Socrates has already qualified the human capacity to follow the gods to the superheavenly place, it would seem that human limitation *must* come from human nature. But if so, we've multiplied tensions rather than resolved them, for what it is to be human, as we discussed in the beginning of this section, *is* to be able to recollect on account of already having seen truth. How could human beings be *essentially* limited in doing something they've already accomplished (or, in non-mythical language, how could human beings be *essentially* unable to access something always already given to them)? Assuredly, there are what we could call "removable" limitations (i.e., limitations which beset us on account of not fully being ourselves on account of the soul's civil war—such as when we are "weighed down" by discordant, reality-resistant appetites—which could be "removed" by quelling the soul's civil war, as discussed in Ch. 2), but these limitations *merely* hamper an innate capacity; they are not limitations *internal to* that innate capacity. If Socrates's characterization of human nature as having already seen the true beings and as possessing by nature the capacity to be carried back to them by recollection is seriously said,⁹⁷ then we do not, in fact, find our reasons for our unfulfilment or incomplete initiation (*ateleis*) in human nature.

7. If the incompleteness of our initiation into the sight of Being comes neither from innate limitations on human capacities nor from divine jealousy, as if the gods hid Being away

⁹⁷ Recall that Griswold, for example, claims that the Palinode itself is "recanted" in the ensuing dialogue. While there are qualifications of the Palinode in the last section of the dialogue (see particularly 265b-c), Griswold dramatically overstates their significance. The dialogue's qualifications are as consistent with the account I give of the Palinode's ontology as they are with Griswold's recanting thesis. However, since my reading of the dialogue is one in which the whole dialogue is structured in a basic harmony around the Palinode's ontology (as opposed to a kind of dialectic of dissatisfaction, as in Griswold), my construal better comports with Socrates's claim at 264c that every *logos* should be put together like a living creature, with parts fitting together to form a whole, for, in my reading, the "parts" are not at odds with each other but instead are all in joint service to the "head."

from mere mortals, then it must come from the nature of Being itself (or, at least, this is what the Palinode seems to indicate is the source of the necessary incompleteness of our initiation). Being is that which fulfills us, when we apprehend it, and that into which we are initiated, when we follow the gods. But what *is* Being, that “really real reality” (*ousia ontōs ousa*), “outside the heavens,” which no poet has ever adequately praised nor ever will, about which “we must have the courage to speak the truth” (247c)? It is “colorless, shapeless, and untouchable, visible to the mind alone, the soul’s pilot, and the source of true knowledge” (247c). As we discussed in the prior chapter, whatever it is (*if*, that is, we can meaningfully predicate “existence,” “essence,” or “quality” of it), it is the inexhaustible, transcendent source of all. One will always be unfulfilled and leave the sight of Being uninitiated, not on account of human *failure*, but on account of Being’s *plenitude*—there’s *always more* to learn, to love, to “taste,” and so, one can always be “ever more” initiated.⁹⁸ The plenitude of Being is reflected even in finite beings as we see preeminently in our experiences of interpersonal love. In genuine friendship, for example one comes to know one’s friend ever more deeply; though we can articulate many, many good things about the friend (and as the friendship deepens, the number of items in our litany asymptotically approaches the infinite), we can never exhaust the goodness of the friend in any set of articulations. We are unable to reduce the friend’s goodness to an intellectual content, but this is not because of our failure to articulate why the friend is good, but instead because there is “ever more” to love in the friend; we can be “ever more” deeply initiated into the friendship itself. If this is true for *a* being, would it not be true even more—“ever more”—

⁹⁸ Socrates concludes his Analogy of the Sun by saying “But, of course, I am leaving out a throng of things,” and then replies to Glaucon’s demand not to “leave even the slightest thing aside,” by saying “I suppose I will leave out quite a bit. But all the same, insofar as it’s possible at present, I’ll not leave anything out willing” (509c). The philosopher’s love is said to be directed toward the *whole* of what he loves, unsatisfied until she grasps the “being of each nature itself” (474c, 490a-b).

for Being as such? Hence, one can be, in a sense, unfulfilled in one's fulfillment (or, conversely, fulfilled in one's directing one's infinite longing to an infinite nourishment).⁹⁹

§4.2. Even the Gods Are Limited? On the Divine Descent

8. It is noteworthy that Socrates does not say “all human souls” or “all mortal souls,” but instead simply “all souls” when he says that “all souls leave the sight of Being unfulfilled” (249b). Contextually, it seems like the remark should be understood as implicitly specifying “all human souls” since the account of all souls leaving the sight of Being uninitiated follows a discussion of how human souls, unlike divine souls, have difficulty making the ascent on account of the malfeasance of the horses and the charioteer's wrongdoing. But is this implicit specification necessary? The gods, too, leave the superheavenly place to return to the heavens, only to make the ascent back to the superheavenly place, over and over again. Perhaps the gods *only* “go back down” (cf. *Republic* 519b, 520b-d) out of service, to continue providentially arranging and caring for the cosmos (*Phaedrus* 246e); or perhaps they descend *only* to guide human souls up (*agein anō*), so that we may come to whatever fulfillment is possible for us. Both of these reasons are certainly part of the account of the divine descent, but they are not the only reasons that Socrates depicts the gods as cyclically ascending and descending.

9. The mythical structure of the Palinode presents the divine ascent and descent as temporally successive, cyclical motions. But, in the name of Zeus, do we “really think that this

⁹⁹ Though the phrasing sounds similar, my formulation here is worlds apart from Griswold's claim that we must “be satisfied with (or in) this state of perpetual dissatisfaction” (*Self-Knowledge*, 106). What Griswold means to say is that desire is necessarily thwarted, and we must rest content in the incapacity to grasp that which we desire; what I mean to say is that we can *ap*-prehend the object of our desire and rest content in the apprehension, even if *com*-prehension is unavailable to us. Our “unfulfilment” is not to be interpreted negatively as our *failure* to obtain what we want, but instead, positively, as our incapacity to exhaust the object of our desire. Further, even if we cannot comprehend the object of our desire, we can know a great deal about that object—infinately much, perhaps (in the negative sense of infinity; knowing the object infinitely in the positive sense would be comprehension).

mythical story is true” (229c)? Socrates says, yes, “in some way, though I can’t say exactly how, we offered an image (*apeikazontes*) of erotic experience [...] in a mythic hymn to your master and mine, Phaedrus, to Eros” (265b-c).¹⁰⁰ As an image, the myth presents and reflects that of which it is the image, even as it falls short of that of which it is the image. Given that the image attempts to depict, in words, that which is beyond the temporal structure of language, the imaging of that which is imaged must be expressed temporally, even if what is imaged is not itself temporal; as Timaeus says, “time is a certain movable image of eternity” (*Timaeus* 37d).¹⁰¹ In ancient Greek thought generally, circular motion is the motion which most aptly represents eternity, since it is a kind of “unmoving motion” insofar as circular motion always returns to its source. The cyclical structure of the divine circuit could reasonably be allegorized, then, as a temporal image of eternity.¹⁰² If so, the gods’ activity, which is separated temporally into two mutually-successive processes, is perhaps more truly understood as a single, eternal activity with two moments (or, at least, what appears to us time-bound creatures as two moments).¹⁰³ Those two moments are receptive dependence and active co-ordination; in an image we will have occasion to deploy again below (see Ch. 6), the gods are like unto glass prisms, which, in receiving light in the unity of color, disperse that same light into the plurality of the color

¹⁰⁰ We’ll return to Socrates’s characterization of the Palinode as an image when discussing the ontology of images in the *Phaedrus* in Ch. 6.

¹⁰¹ Citations of the *Timaeus* come from Peter Kalkavage’s translation (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2001).

¹⁰² Alternatively, but, I think, not necessarily by contrast, one might see the mythological presentation of the divine circuit as a personification of the *perichorēsis* (the dancing-around) of the stars and the planets about the center of the cosmos, as suggested by Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, Ch. 6.4; see note 54 to Ch. 2 above. We will utilize dance imagery to add another sense to the divine descent in Ch. 6.

¹⁰³ On this point, see, for example, Ficino, *Commentary*, chs. 22-23. By contrast, Seth Benardete reads the temporal structure of divine activity in the myth to indicate that “the gods have to abandon the cosmos” in order to be nourished. “They cannot care for body and soul at the same time” (*Rhetoric of Morality*, 140).

spectrum.¹⁰⁴ By receiving nourishment from that which *is*, the gods are able to order and care for that which *is less* (in that material being is comparatively dissolute and self-insufficient).

10. By depicting the gods as needing to make the ascent so that they can be nourished, Socrates indicates that the divine perfection of the gods does *not* lie in their complete self-sufficiency. While the gods are in no way bad (242e), they are ontologically dependent on that which is superior to them (namely, the forms, and ultimately, “really real reality”). Hence, Burger misses the mark dramatically when she says “If the gods represent the perfection of self-sufficiency, they could never desire what is lacking in themselves and hence are, by nature, alien to the experience of *erōs*, the very experience which is necessary for man’s aspiration to the divine.”¹⁰⁵ The divinity of the gods comes not from being self-sufficient (in such a way as to have no lack, and thus have no *erōs*),¹⁰⁶ but in being perfectly ordered to that which makes them whole, for it is by being near to those things in the superheavenly place that a “a god is divine” (249c).¹⁰⁷ If they are said to be self-sufficient, it is not because they have everything

¹⁰⁴ On this, see, for example, Dionysius, *Divine Names* 696a: “Their longing for the Good makes them what they are and confers on them their well-being. Shaped by what they yearn for, they exemplify goodness and, as the Law of God requires of them, they share with those below them the good gifts which have come their way.”

¹⁰⁵ Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 56. In Burger’s defense, we frequently do find in Plato remarks to the effect that the gods are self-sufficient; see, e.g., *Euthyphro* 13c-d, *Republic* 381b-c, *Symposium* 202c-d, *Philebus* 60c, *Lysis* 215a. There isn’t space to analyze each text in order to see if those texts are consistent with what I suggest concerning the *Phaedrus*, but a general remark is warranted: if the gods are good and self-sufficient by *possessing* the good (e.g., *Philebus* 60c), then there is no incompatibility between texts proclaiming the gods’ self-sufficiency and the *Phaedrus*, for the gods’ self-sufficiency would not be wholly native to them (that could only be true of the absolutely first principle, and generally, Plato does not speak of the gods in the plural as if they were absolutely first) but would be dependent on their contact with The Good, irreducible to them. By way of contrast to Burger, see White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 103: “There is, however, an appetitive factor in divine nature, since the gods move about if they so wish. The fact that they must have the power to do so implies that the nature of the gods is complex, including an element of privation;” cf. 98.

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, the later Platonic tradition is perfectly happy to say that even the Good (the One, the transcendent God, the cause of all, etc.) is, in a way, erotic. Cf. Plotinus *Ennead* VI.8.15.1-2 and Dionysius, *Divine Names* 708a-b, 712a-b.

¹⁰⁷ See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 86, 105. Strictly speaking, the gods are not even sufficient to complete the ascent by their own resources, for upon reaching “the summit of heaven, they go to the edge and

they need, but because they are equipped with all that they need to obtain what they need. Because the gods' charioteers are good, they will be good at ruling their souls and will be rightly directed toward what's best; because the gods' horses are "good and from good stock" (246a-b), they will be obedient to their charioteers, and so nothing will prevent the gods from making the ascent to the place wherein they are nourished (247d-e). The gods have a "participated" or "dependent" self-sufficiency. The gods are certainly self-sufficient with respect to us (as *Euthyphro* 13c-d makes plain), but this need not imply that they are absolutely self-sufficient given that they are still ontologically dependent on the cause of all. In the *Phaedrus*, we see that dependence in the fact that the gods need to go to the superheavenly place in order to be nourished. While they are what they are on account of their proximity to the superheavenly place (249c), "really real reality" *is* what it is simply.¹⁰⁸

11. By presenting the gods as ascending and descending, Socrates is presenting them as being just like us and like Diotima's description of the *daimōn* Love. The gods, the *daimonia*, and we human beings are *all* the children of "resource" and "poverty" (*Symposium* 203b), distinguished only insofar as the gods are perfectly oriented toward that which makes them whole (because both of their horses are good and from good stock; *Phaedrus* 246a-b), whereas we first have to master ourselves so that we may follow (*hepantai*) the gods' example.¹⁰⁹ Though

stand on the rim; there the revolving motion carries them around as they stand and gaze on things outside the heavens" (247c). In order to receive the fullness of what they receive, they must be carried.

¹⁰⁸ The *Timaeus* makes a similar point. The demiurge, addressing the gods whom he has brought into being, says "God of gods, you works of whom I am both craftsman and father, born through me and indissoluble—*unless, that is, I myself were willing to dissolve you!* Now, to be sure, all that is bound together can be dissolved, and only one who is bad would be willing to dissolve that which is beautifully joined together and in good condition. For these reasons, and since indeed you have been born, you are not immortal nor entirely indissoluble, yet in no way shall you suffer this very dissolution, nor shall you happen to meet with the doom of death, since through my will have you been allotted a bond greater still and more lordly than those bonds with which you, when born, were bound together" (41a-b).

¹⁰⁹ See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 123, 134. Based on Socrates's placement of the gods between mortal nature and "really real reality," one might suspect that Plato "changed his mind" between the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* on the divine nature; in doing so, one would, I think, miss the forest for the trees. As

the gods' "descent" is an expression of their providential care, it is *also* an indication of their place in the Palinode's ontological hierarchy—the gods are *not* what is ultimate, but are instead ontologically dependent on what is ultimate, just as we are.¹¹⁰ Hence, the gods can only model and mediate the ascent (by being for us a guide to follow); they do their work by leading us to that which leads *simply*, Being. By following the gods, we "becom[e] like a god as far as [is] in one's power" (*Theaetetus* 176b; cf. *Phaedrus* 253b-c)—the goal of philosophy—which means we become like the gods in their perfect orientation to that which is the source of divinity (ultimately, the Good).¹¹¹ As we discussed in §3.2 above, Socrates likewise disclaims ultimacy, disclaims the capacity to teach; instead, Socrates only claims to mediate and to lead. Socrates can do so precisely because he, like the gods, is oriented toward that which leads *simply*, Being. By doing as the gods do, and by loving as the gods love, Socrates himself becomes like unto the divine; likewise, by modeling ourselves on Socrates in his indefatigable orientation to the true, we too can become like unto the divine.¹¹²

White argues (see *ibid.* 55-56), Eros, whether as a *daimonion* (per the *Symposium*) or as a god (per the *Phaedrus*) is an intermediary between human beings and that which is ultimately lovable. In either case, love is that intermediary which, by interpreting and transporting messages between the extremes, "fills up the gap" (*Symposium* 202e) between human beings and that which is the ultimate object of human love. The *daimonia* and the gods, whatever differences there may be between them, are *not* the forms but what leads us to the forms.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 103. Ferrari similarly suggests that the distinction between the gods and human souls is one of quantity, not kind (*Listening to the Cicadas* 130). See also Nicholson, "Ontology," 22.

¹¹¹ Immediately before this remark, Socrates speaks of trying to flee from Here to There. Plotinus helps us to see why the philosopher's "flight from here to there" is not a Gnostic desire to escape the evil of bodily existence: "But when he says 'we must take flight from thence' he is no longer referring to life on earth. For 'flight,' he says, is not going away from earth but being on earth 'just and holy with the help of wisdom'; what he means is that we must fly from wickedness; so evil for him is wickedness and all that comes from wickedness" (*Ennead* I.8.6.9-13). Likewise, Plotinus uses the language of "inclination" (*neuein*) to distinguish between the claim that bodily existence is evil and the claim that an *inclination* to becoming and the principle of becoming is evil insofar as it leads the soul toward lower goods rather than higher goods. See I.8.4.17-23. Plotinus even speaks of the good as being present to matter (which is often taken as the principle of evil in the Platonic tradition); cf. I.8.15.23-29. Hence, Plotinus would seem to be in agreement with Augustine, as discussed in notes 78 and 85 above.

¹¹² The logic of mediation here resembles the image of the "magnetic stone" given in Plato's *Ion*. The magnetic source draws each metal ring to it, and in the process, gives each metal ring its magnetic power, so that, by being attracted to the magnetic stone, metal rings participate in magnetism. Accordingly, they

§4.3. The Meaning and Possibility of “Perpetual Initiation”

12. If the gods are divine by their perfect orientation to and nearness to that upon which they ontologically depend for their nourishment (the true beings in the superheavenly place), then we now have a model according to which we can understand how a non-divine soul can be “perpetually initiated” (249c), despite having “left the sight of Being, uninitiated” (248b). While no one—not even the gods—can adequately receive the fullness of an inexhaustible source, one can, in principle, consistently choose to orient oneself toward that source, as Socrates does, and thereby be perpetually initiated. In other words, in a consistent choice, to which one continually bears witness in one’s life and action, in the way in which one lives-through one’s life (*diagein*), one can enter *ever more deeply* into that inexhaustibility, despite being inadequate to receive it in its fullness.¹¹³ The gods make this choice with perfect consistency and thereby are divine; human beings, on the other hand, struggle to make this choice at all, let alone consistently. Struggling to make the choice, however, is *not* evidence for the impossibility of a human being emulating the gods in perfectly choosing to love what is worthiest of being loved.¹¹⁴ Socrates lived and died in his consistent obedience to his Apollonian mission; to borrow a remark from one of the *Letters*, Socrates’s life “manifest[ed]

can then draw another metal ring to them and, in doing so, give away their magnetic character to that next ring. And so on. Socrates uses the image in the *Ion* to suggest how poets, rhapsodes, and the rhapsodes’ audiences can each be inspired—magnetized—by poetic madness coming from the Muses, for the Muses, in drawing Homer to themselves, inspire Homer with poetic madness, which then draws the Homeric rhapsodes to Homer, in turn inspiring them to draw their audiences to them. As we’ll see in §6, this image very much presents the same logic articulated in the language of the gods’ leading (*agein*) and our following (*hepesthai*) in the cosmic circuit; see also Chs. 4 and 6.

¹¹³ On this point, see Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 199-216; likewise, Gordon, *Plato’s Erotic World*, 203.

¹¹⁴ As we already noted, *Republic* 518b-d claims that education is *neither* putting intellectual contents in an empty vessel *nor* restoring a capacity that has withered away, *but instead* a “leading around” (*periagōgē*) of the whole soul (i.e., not just the charioteer, but also the horses) so that that instrument with which the soul “looks” (i.e., reason) is directed at the best and brightest things (i.e., “really real reality,” the Good, Beauty itself). The soul’s capacity is *always already* there and ready to be used, if only it is directed rightly.

the most philosophical of the philosophical virtues; for to be steadfast, loyal, and dependable—this, I say, is true philosophy” (X.358c).

13. The Palinode describes the human possibility of consistently choosing the best life, whereby a human being would be “perpetually initiated” into the vision of Being. “Thought is,” as Socrates say, “always, according to her capability through memory, near to those things [the true beings beyond the heavens], and by this nearness a god is divine. And only a man who correctly handles such reminders and is perpetually initiated into these perfect mysteries is truly perfect” (249c). Shortly before this remark, Socrates claims that “If any soul is in the company of a god (*theōi sunopados*) and perceives something of the truth, she is free from pain until the next cycle begins; if she is *always* able to do this, she will *always* be safe” (248c; emphasis added). Given the conditional nature of these remarks, one might conclude that Socrates is only defining an ideal, which we can asymptotically approach but never actually reach. Perhaps. (Though it should be noted that Socrates prefaces his account of the various lives that human souls can lead by referring to the “Inescapable Law,” to which we are about to turn.) But as we’ll go on to discuss, the dialogue at no point gives any indication that it is *impossible* to consistently choose the best life, nor that having chosen an inferior life prohibits one from living well within that life and choosing a better life in the future. At most, the dialogue indicates the difficulty and the fragility of consistently choosing the best life. Even the philosophical souls can err,¹¹⁵ “for nothing human is altogether secure” (III.323b).

14. To recapitulate, so far we’ve given reasons to resist essentializing any distinctions within human soul-types or within the various lives into which human beings have been

¹¹⁵ See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 116: “The philosophical life, lived by a human being with other human beings, is a type of existence which, although the highest in its accessibility to reality, remains fraught with peril and the chance for error and other forms of misadventure.”

thrown. Any distinctions between human lives are relativized within the more governing distinction between being human (having seen the truth and being able to recollect it) and being animal. Further, the distinction between the human life and the divine life is one of the perfection of one's orientation toward the object of our joint desire. Corruption harms us, distracts us, and makes it more difficult for us to quell the civil war in our souls, but it does *not* alter our natural capacities; corrupt souls are not prohibited from healing or recollection as if by a kind of Platonic "total depravity." To be corrupt, after all, just means to be "less recently initiated," for all souls have been initiated (albeit, incompletely). But to be less recently initiated is a world apart from not being initiated (whereby the soul would be unable to understand according to form, and thus be unable to even enter the human form).

§5. Distinction 2: The "Inescapable Law" and the Contingency of Choice

§5.1. The Nine-Fold Hierarchy: Natures or Starting Points?

1. As we've just seen, Socrates suggests, in the course of his description of the "Inescapable Law," that *if* one can always see some truth in the ascent (if, that is, one can always get one's horses sufficiently in order that one may lift her head out beyond the heavens to see that which is in the superheavenly place), then she will always be safe. Such a soul would be divine, like the gods, insofar as it will always be "near" to that which makes the gods divine. Such a soul would be made like unto the gods, but not itself a god, for the gods are marked by the perfection of their orientation, whereas the perpetually "safe" soul is marked by a deep-seated contingency—it is *always* possible (though *never* necessary) that the "safe" soul could choose otherwise.¹¹⁶ However, given that this brief description of the perpetually safe soul

¹¹⁶ See Nicholson, "Ontology," 22-23: "But the composition of the divine soul differs from that of the mortal, so that while the disclosure of justice itself was always perfect, our constitution, inferior to theirs, makes us the prey of other desires [...] In short, we lack simplicity and clarity in our relation to the truth,

comes before the nine-fold distinction in soul-types, one might think that such a situation is, again, just an idealization, and not relevant to the factual human condition which all incarnate souls live, for material human beings are precisely those who have failed to consistently choose the best life. The nine-fold distinction in soul-types does *not* seem to include the perpetually “safe” soul, so let us turn away from the ideal to the factual condition in which we find ourselves.

2. According to the Inescapable Law, “whenever a soul cannot see (*mē ideí*) the truth and is thus unable to follow the path (*adunatēsasa epíspēsthai*),¹¹⁷ and by some misfortune (*tini suntuchiai*) gets weighed down burdened by forgetfulness and wrongdoing, and in her heaviness sheds her feathers and falls to earth, then the following law applies” (248c). Each human soul—newly “wingless”—is “planted into” a different human type in proportion to the amount of Being it has “witnessed.”¹¹⁸ The souls are hierarchized into nine different categories, based on the “amount” of Being seen:

1. one who loves wisdom (i.e., a philosopher), beauty, or something musical and erotic¹¹⁹

we lack purity of heart.” Likewise, see White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 113 and Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, 237.

¹¹⁷ Note that *epíspēsthai*, the aorist middle infinitive of *ephepō*, is etymologically related to *hepesthai* (for *epíspēsthai* is a middle deponent broken off from *epi* + *hepō*, and *hepesthai* is a middle deponent from *hepō*).

¹¹⁸ It is worth noting that “amount” is a misleading way of putting the point, for it implies that there are a set of discrete entities to be seen and that one’s vision of what’s in the superheavenly place could be partial in the sense of having seen some three or four out of ten beings. A better way to understand the point is to understand “seeing less” as “seeing less adequately” rather than “seeing fewer things,” as when a seal is impressed on more or less receptive wax. The same seal is pressed in the same way on each blob of wax, but, on account of the different conditions of the wax, the seal’s imprint will be more adequately or less adequately received. See *Theaetetus* 191c-195a. The *same* thing is received, but according to the capacity of the recipient, as per the late Platonic and Medieval axiom (e.g., *Liber de Causis*, trans. Dennis Brand [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984], 99: “everything receives what is above it only after the mode according to which it can receive it, not after the mode according to which the thing received exists”). On this point, see also Nicholson, *Philosophy of Love*, 188-189.

¹¹⁹ Plotinus sees hierarchy even in these three options within the first rank, for, when trying to determine which of the three practices will best accomplish the soul’s “leading up” (*anagōgē*; I.3.1.5), he argues that both the musician and the lover are as yet unable to move from beauties to Beauty; the philosopher, by

2. a law-abiding king, military man, or ruler
3. a politician, an estate manager, or a money-maker
4. a lover of toil, a gymnast, or a doctor
5. a prophet, a seer, or a priest of mystic rites
6. a poet, or someone concerned with imitation
7. a craftsman or farmer
8. a sophist or demagogue
9. a tyrant¹²⁰

Socrates then goes on to discuss the drama of incarnate human lives as they live, die, and are born again. Notably, Socrates claims that “only the discursive thinking (*dianoia*) of a philosopher, the one who is in love with wisdom, grows wings, as is just” (249c). This remark could be taken to indicate another putatively essential distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical souls, for only the philosophical souls can regain their wings and thus make the ascent back to the superheavenly place; however, it could only be so taken when wrenched from its context.

3. There are a number of remarks surrounding the claim that only philosophical souls grow wings which relativize the apparently essentializing distinction drawn between philosophical and non-philosophical souls, according to the Inescapable Law. First, no soul may be “planted into a brute animal” in the first of its earthly lives (248d), which is fitting, given the diversity of human and animal natures discussed above. While properly human souls *may* move “downward” after death into an animal form, a human soul in bestial exile may,

contrast, “has begun to move to the higher world, and is only at a loss for someone to show him the way” (I.3.3.1-4).

¹²⁰ In a footnote, Burger gives an interesting read of the way in which the nine types are ordered. “The first four roles are expressed in the genitive, after *eis*, with ordinal numbers, the fifth in the accusative, the last four roles in the nominative, with the numbers representing the level of soul in the dative. The first four types seem, then, to portray the soul as the active principle while the role is only a receptacle, whereas the last four portray the role as active while the soul only receives it” (*Defense of Writing*, 58, note 29). Burger goes on to show how the ninth role corresponds to the first, the eighth to the second, the seventh to the third, and the sixth to the fourth, with the fifth having its own purpose. The claim that the first four and the last four are distinguished by whether it is the soul or the role that is active on the other as receptive coheres nicely with our claims about the soul’s destiny being shaped by which elements in the soul are giving the hegemonic role.

unlike the true animal, also move back “upward,” into the human form (249b). Minimally, the distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical souls is, as we’ve already claimed, relativized within the more fundamental distinction between rational and non-rational mortal souls. Second, Socrates says that while it takes each soul “10,000 years to return to the same spot whence she started—for the wings don’t grow back before then”¹²¹—souls in the first category can re-sprout their wings in only 3,000 years, if “these souls choose (*belōntai*) the same life three times in succession” (248e-249a). While Socrates seems to suggest that the 7,000-year reprieve is only available to the philosophical soul-type, this simply means that a philosopher can return to “wingedness” more quickly than a non-philosopher. It’s a quantitative distinction, not a qualitative distinction. The other eight soul-types, then, seem equally able to regrow their wings, albeit more slowly than the philosophical souls.

4. The dialogue, however, further trivializes (at least in principle) even this quantitative distinction between the non-philosophers and the philosophers, who seem to regrow their wings 7,000 years earlier than the non-philosophers, for one’s eschatological hopes are tied directly to how one lives (*diagein*; “leads-through”) *each* of her earthly lives. The key point comes right after the enumeration of the nine-fold hierarchy: “In all (*hapasin*) these men, the one who lives (*diagogēi*) justly has a better portion (*moiras*); the one who lives unjustly, a worse portion” (248e). In other words, regardless of one’s “placement” according to the Inescapable Law,

¹²¹ It is important to attend carefully to the grammar of this sentence, for the sentence does *not* say that all souls *will* return to their winged condition after 10,000 years, as Hackforth’s translation implies (“For a soul does not return to the place whence she came for ten thousand years” [*Plato’s Phaedrus*, 85]). Rather, the sentence gives a condition for how long it will take a soul to return to its winged condition *if* indeed it does return. Translated literally, the sentence reads: “For not one soul comes into the place from which it came within 10,000 years” (*eis men gar to auto hothēn hēkei hē psuchē hekastē ouk aphikneitai etōn muriōn*), except the philosophical soul, as the rest of the sentence clarifies. Hackforth’s reading would, to some extent, make the job of this chapter easier—and one could perhaps point to 256e-257a as confirmation of Hackforth’s reading—but the right construal of the text makes the claim being considered in this chapter more profound, for our “return” to wingedness is not guaranteed, as we’ll discuss throughout the rest of this section.

what matters is how one leads-through the life into which she's been thrown. The way by which each soul leads-through each of her lives is in part a matter of choice and in part a matter of social influence and chance (§5.2). The differences between the ways in which two souls lead-through their lives, or the difference between the ways in which one soul leads-through two different lives, do not amount to absolute distinctions between philosophical and non-philosophical natures but instead amount to distinctions between more or less philosophically-oriented ways of living the human condition, which, as we said above, is intermediate between the true animals (as opposed to human souls in animal form) and the gods. One's placement in the nine-fold hierarchy, then, does not distinguish between different ending possibilities for a given soul, but instead indicates where each soul starts in the same journey. All souls can complete the journey; philosophical souls just have a head start. Further, given that each soul wants to resemble the god it followed in the cosmic ascent, and given that the gods are marked by their non-envy and their care for all, the philosophical soul will not take her head start for granted, but will complete her becoming-like the divine precisely by caring for those souls who have yet to be re-fledged.¹²²

§5.2. Choice, (Mis)fortune, and Society

5. As we've just indicated, choice plays a significant role in one's eschatological prospects in the Palinode's myth. The philosophical soul doesn't regain its wings after 3,000 years unless it *chooses* the philosophical life three times in a row. By saying that the value of

¹²² We'll return to this point in Ch. 6. A similar logic is implied by Socrates's demand that the philosopher goes back down into the cave (*Republic* 519d, 520c) for the sake of "turning [the cave-dweller's souls] around (*periagōgē*) from a day that is like night to the true day," and thereby 'lead[ing] them up to the light (*anaxei autous eis phōs*), just as some men are said to have gone from Hades up to the gods" (521c). The philosopher's ascent out of the cave is not complete until the philosopher descends back into the cave, in part to help free trapped souls.

one's allotment in each life is a matter of justice (248e), the myth seems to be indicating that living justly is an implied requirement for living philosophically, for the philosopher more than any other "follows and makes herself an image of the god" (*arista theōi hepomēnē kai eikasmēnē*; 248a) she follows by being near to that god in memory (249c-d), and the gods are just (247a). A philosophical soul that chooses injustice would, it would seem, forfeit its 7,000-year reprieve to the extent that its choices of injustice were consistent. A philosopher who fails to choose the philosophical life, the just life, is judged like all other souls which fail to choose justice and sent to a "house of corrections under the earth where they pay their penalty" for the remainder of its current millenary cycle (249b).¹²³ Conversely, non-philosophical souls which choose justice will, after being judged, be "made airborne (*keouphisthesai*) by Justice" and "go to a place in the heavens and live (*diagousin*) a life (*bios*) worthy of the one they lived (*ebiosan*) in their human form" (249a-b). It may be the case that a philosophical soul is more *inclined* than other soul-types to choose justice, since it has a better grasp on the nature of reality and is thereby better able to give each thing its due. Likewise, it may be the case that a tyrannical soul is less inclined than other soul-types to choose justice, since it has a worse grasp on the nature of reality and consequently is more easily led into the idolatrous absolutization of relative goods characteristic of tyranny, caused by the greater "strength" (*rhōmē*) of the tyrant's "love" (*erōs* as reduced to desire for pleasure, as symbolized by the wanton horse) compared to its reasoning

¹²³ "House of corrections" translates *dikaiōteria*, literally, a place for making just. We can only think of the place under the earth as a place for punishment if we understand punishment to be about correction and rehabilitation rather than retribution or some other such motivation, as Socrates argues in the *Gorgias*. It is worth attending to the etymology here because, as the dialogue is about to say, justice "uplifts" or "lightens" the soul, and so the soul needs to be "lightened" so that it may return to the earth for its next life rather than remain under the earth. Taken out of the temporal structure of the myth, we can understand this remark to indicate that our just and unjust actions are their own rewards and punishments, for what we do affects our way of being (cf. *Laws* 728aff). Being just elevates us here and now by bringing us into right relation to reality; being unjust sends us "below the earth" here and now by weakening our capacity to act as a whole being and by enslaving us to what is comparatively unreal.

capacity (the charioteer; cf. 238a-c). But in either case, each is equally able to choose either justice or injustice, and so each is able to “move” upward or downward for the remainder of the current millenary cycle.

6. The myth complicates the matter of choice by commenting not only on the relevance for our choices for or against justice in *this* incarnate life, but also on the relevance of our choices *between* two incarnations. Crucially, Socrates says: “In the 1,000th year *both* types of souls [i.e., those who have gone to the place of correction and those who’ve been made airborne by justice] arrive at a place of allotments (*klērosin te kai hairesin*) where they *choose* (*hairounti*) their second life according to their wishes (*hon an thelei hekaste*)” (249b; emphasis added).¹²⁴ This choice appears to be one to be made in complete freedom. Again, while one’s prior way of living might incline one to make one choice rather than another, no allotment is imposed upon any soul. Nothing prevents one who had begun the 10,000-year cycle as a tyrannical soul from choosing the lot of a philosophical soul and living accordingly for the next three millenary cycles, and so nothing prevents, it would seem, even the tyrant from becoming winged in as few as 4,000 years. Doing so may be improbable, especially given just how “weighed down” a soul becomes on account of dissolute lusts and the solidification of a character based on pursuing dissipation, but it’s not impossible. As we discussed in §3 above, the soul can be turned around to look at the nourishing truth and thereby be healed. As we’ll

¹²⁴ That each soul may choose its next life according to its wishes recalls Socrates’s remarks in the Myth of Er, which concludes the *Republic* (see especially 620a-d, 621c-d). For a careful interpretation of what claims are entailed by the myth, see Kenneth Dorter, “Free Will, Luck, and Happiness in the Myth of Er,” *Journal of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 28 (2003). Dorter interprets the myth as indicating that while being “perfectly happy may not always be in our power, [...] being more or less happy always is” (140), and so, even if we suffer some mischance or another or get a bad draw in the parceling out of allotments, we still have a remarkable degree of agency within our given life, even though many, perhaps most, will allow habit and past experience to be more directive for each life than rational volition. My interpretation of the Palinode’s myth’s understanding of chance, fated allotment, and choice broadly agrees with Dorter’s interpretation of the Myth of Er.

discuss in the next chapter, love effects the leading-around (*periagōgē*) of the soul. Even the tyrannical soul can be healed by love, if only it allows itself to receive it.

7. Further, the dialogue seems to indicate that making a choice for justice in one life, regardless of one's soul-type, will be sufficient to guarantee swifter re-fledging.¹²⁵ Commenting on the eschatological prospects of the pair of lovers who “adopt a more coarse way of life, one that loves honor and not wisdom” (256c), Socrates claim that though their souls will be wingless in death, they are “eager to sprout feathers” and “have not carried off a small prize for their erotic madness,” for, as we saw above, “it is the law (*nomos*) for those who have already begun their journey in lower heaven that they shall not return to the dark path under the earth, but shall lead a bright life (*phanon bion diagontas*) in blessed journeys with each other, and from their love shall grow, in due time, common plumage” (256d-e). Given that these lovers are explicitly not philosophical, we have here an indication that non-philosophical souls can also ascend. To do so, non-philosophical souls have to learn self-mastery and to train and restrain “what enables viciousness to enter the soul” (256b), namely, the lust for pleasure (the wanton horse). Even tyrannical souls, in whom the wanton horse is most hegemonic, can learn

¹²⁵ As Gordon argues, (philosophical) questioning helps us get to a less risky place of conviction, but not a risk-free place (*Plato's Erotic World*, 77-78); indeed, we need to develop courage so that we may remain steadfast in the task of living justly (110; cf. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 36). Philosophy (in the sense of the act of dialectical discussion) can prepare us for philosophy (in the sense of living a life structured by fidelity to reason, justice, and the Good), but it is not sufficient for living out our commitment to truth, goodness, and beauty. Griswold expresses a similar concern when he argues that Socrates can't allow himself to have thought that he'd finally silenced the critics of philosophy because this would rob them of their voice; instead, philosophy needs to be justified again and again. Unless Socrates can convince his anti-philosophical interlocutors that there are philosophical questions, he can't convince himself of it (see “Plato's Metaphilosophy: Why Plato Wrote Dialogues,” *Platonic Writings*, 157-158). Though Griswold rightly notes that the philosopher must retain an abidingly open stance (not, per Griswold, on account of his failure to convince his interlocutor but instead on account of his being open always to a greater understanding), predicating Socrates's own conviction about the value of philosophy on his capacity to persuade those who have a vested interest in not being persuaded (particularly, sophists and orators who make money and gain power by being unfaithful to truth) is, I think, a capitulation to sophistry and a misunderstanding of philosophy's aim (cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 269-277).

to train their pleasure-lust¹²⁶ and thereby quell, to some extent, the civil war in their souls, so that they might act justly.

8. To some extent, the cultivation of order in the non-philosophical soul, by which it might lead-through a just life and thereby choose a superior way of life in the next millenary cycle, is a social and political matter, subject also to the contingencies of fortune. As we've just seen, in order to escape wandering for the full 10,000 years of winglessness, the soul has to love well *consistently* (either by loving wisdom without deceit or by loving a beloved while loving wisdom; 249a), and while the soul's choices, cultivation of virtue, and rightly-ordered love are what mostly determine the soul's outcomes, Socrates does indicate that there are additional factors which come into play in one's choices: misfortune and society. These features are especially noteworthy, for by bringing them into focus, Plato, unlike the Stoics, admits another locus besides choice wherein contingency may come into play, one which does not depend on the will of this particular soul.

9. The roles that misfortune and society play further relativize the essentializing distinction between the corrupt non-philosophers and the recently initiated philosophers insofar as they provide ways by which external influences can drag the soul into corruption, as well as ways by which it may be easier for a (non-philosophical) soul to be directed toward what's good for it. Accordingly, the corruption of the corrupt soul may not be "by nature,"

¹²⁶ Recall that the wanton horse, while not obedient to reason like the noble horse, is trainable, as implied by 247b and 254b-e. The reading of the wanton horse's trainability I develop in this chapter and the next disagrees with Benardete's claim that "the guidance of the human charioteer can never be so perfect as to compensate entirely for the viciousness of one of the horses" (*Rhetoric of Morality*, 140). Similarly, White claims that "The disposition for evil can be controlled, not extirpated" (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 105). While I agree that the human pursuit of goodness is fragile, I disagree that the viciousness of the wanton horse is unexorcisable. The wanton horse is not evil *per se*, even if it has an inclination which must occasion constant vigilance.

but instead, may be a result, at least to some extent, of influences and factors beyond one's control, and while the roles of chance and society can never wholly account for the well-being of a soul, they can play a significant role in bringing the soul into well-being. We will briefly discuss these two points here just to indicate how each of these points further relativizes the essentiality of a distinction between the corrupt non-philosopher and the recently initiated philosopher before moving on to talk about the myth's particular use of *diagein*.

10. In two places in the Palinode, Socrates refers to the soul's misfortune as having a bearing on the soul's earthly life. At the beginning of his account of the Inescapable Law, Socrates differentiates the perpetually safe soul from each of those which are incarnated into one of the nine lives discussed above. The perpetually safe soul is so on account of always remaining in the company of a god and perceiving something of the truth, but "whenever a soul cannot see the truth and is thus unable to follow (*hepisthesthai*) the path, and by some misfortune (*timi suntuchiai*) gets weighed down, burdened by forgetfulness and wrongdoing, and in her heaviness sheds her feathers and falls to earth," then the Inescapable Law applies (248c). Shortly thereafter, following an account of how one who "correctly handles" reminders is thereby "perpetually initiated" (249c), Socrates refers to those souls who have difficulty recalling the true beings, especially "those souls which saw them briefly or had bad luck (*edustuchēsan*) when falling here, so that when they were turned (*trapomenai*) toward injustice by some company (*hupo tōn homilōn*) or other here they naturally forgot the sacred things they had seen there" (250a).

11. In both cases, the soul's misfortune is linked to its failure to see the true beings beyond the heavens and to whatever "weighs down" the soul so that it falls into incarnation. Whether the misfortune simply *is* the fall of the soul or whether misfortune causes or occasions

the fall of the soul is not particularly clear in the myth, but in either case, we might expect that speaking of fortune, misfortune, or chance is a popular and periphrastic way of referring to the confluence of hidden causal chains (hidden not *per se* but to the soul suffering from misfortune),¹²⁷ whether natural or divine, rather than an identification of some fundamental feature of the causal structure of reality, as suggested, perhaps, by Hesiod's reference to Chaos being the origin of all things (*Theogony* 135). The experience of misfortune is an experience of passivity and ignorance with respect to the activity of other causes, for if the soul had a better recognition of its situation, it would have chosen accordingly since it is impossible to err knowingly. Griswold, for example, reduces (that is, "leads back") the soul's misfortune to ignorance of the meaning and effects of its prenatal choice of a life (with reference to 250a) and to the competitive jostling of various souls with each other in their attempt to follow the gods (with reference to 248a).¹²⁸ If this kind of "re-ductive" account of fortune is correct, then we would better understand the contingency of the soul's capacity to achieve its well-being by looking at the ways in which external causes and influences can affect the soul's efforts by

¹²⁷ As, for example, Aristotle claims at *Physics* II.4; cf. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, V.1. As Sachs comments in his translation of Aristotle's *Physics* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004], "Chance is a genuine and widespread part of the world, but a subordinate one, and the mysterious thing called fortune is just chance that befalls human beings" (70). As we've already noted and will go on to discuss, there is a significant emphasis on providence in the *Phaedrus* (an emphasis taken up further in the *Laws* (cf. 903bff.).

¹²⁸ For the soul's ignorance of its prenatal choice of a life, see Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 100-101; Griswold suggests that this choice is governed by "Necessity, not Freedom" (101). For the soul's being jostled by other souls in the ascent, see 99-100. While I agree with Griswold that the role of chance is to be reduced to identifiable causes, I do not think it is correct to refer to the prenatal ascent of the soul as a "war of all against all," for by doing so, Griswold interpolates foreign assumptions into his account (foreign assumptions that Plato specifically argues against in *Republic* II and *Laws* I). While souls may certainly get in each other's way and (partially) cause each other's downfall, they do not do this on account of necessity (as per Hobbes, for whom all goods that each person desires in the State of Nature have a "zero-sum" character) but on account of ignorance (for competing to outpace other souls in one's attempt to follow the gods to the superheavenly place is a misunderstanding of the nature of the ascent, for all souls can be equally nourished—the superheavenly nourishment is not "zero-sum") and disordered desire. On the mistake of supposing that really real reality is a zero-sum good, see especially Fussi, "As the Wolf Loves the Lamb," 72; see also White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 113.

their presence or absence. As we already noted above, the divine is not envious, and so there is no reason to think that the gods' acts would impede us in our attempt to achieve our well-being; to the contrary, they are presented as caring for us, and thus would actively aid us (as we will discuss later on). It is worth noting that where there is the possibility of misfortune, there is also the possibility of good fortune, and the whole Palinode is framed by the fact that divinely-given erotic madness is the "greatest good fortune" (*ep' eutuchiaī tēi megistēi*) we can receive (*didotai*; 245b-c).¹²⁹

12. By contrast to divine care, human acts both impede and aid us. As we just saw, Socrates also suggests that a soul, especially one for whom the prenatal vision was more inadequate, can be "turned (*trapomenai*) toward injustice by some company (*homiliōn*) or other here" (250a). In other words, there's a social dimension to one's conduct, both in the prenatal experience of striving to follow the gods and here and now. One's *homilia* ("togetherness")—an ambiguous word which can mean a gathering of people, the company one keeps, or sexual intercourse—can have a bearing on one's capacity to handle reminders correctly, whether positively or negatively, since one's company can lead one in various ways, as the dialogue's prologue dramatizes with its frequent repetition of *agein* and *agein*-compounds.¹³⁰ In the dramatic prelude to the Palinode, Socrates expresses fear that he will be forced to slander love by Phaedrus (242a), for the desire to win honor among human beings may lead him, like

¹²⁹ Ferrari argues that the myth's function is to describe the place of contingency in the philosophical life (*Listening to the Cicadas*, 133); by depicting our choice of a prenatal life as a matter of chance, the myth inoculates us against the experience of guilt in relation to our fallenness without absolving us of responsibility for dealing with our fallen state (135). Though I think Ferrari's claims about the role of contingency in the Palinodic myth are right—especially his claim that the moral life is lived not in spite of contingency but in coming to deal with our contingency (137)—I will argue in the coming chapters that this contingency needs to be situated within a greater context.

¹³⁰ On this, see Gordon, *Plato's Erotic World*, 166-174. Phaedrus is depicted as being led by Akoumenos, Lysias, and Socrates, and Socrates is depicted as being led by Phaedrus, his memories of poetic authorities, and the various divinities that inhabit the grove.

Ibycus, to slander the divine (242d); Socrates is saved from himself, from Phaedrus, and from the lower-level divinities of the grove by the presence of his *daimonion* (242b-c). After the Palinode, Socrates comments on the way by which knowledgeable speakers (not just rhetoricians, but all speakers) can lead souls (*psuchagōgia*; 261a, 271c), either toward truth (*eis phōs agein* at 261e; *agagōn* at 266a) or away from it (*apagōn* at 262b; *paragoi* at 262d). At the end of the dialogue, both Socrates and Phaedrus are charged with bringing the truth to which they've born witness to their respective companions, Isocrates and Lysias (278e-279b), and leave the grove as companions having all things in common (279c).

13. One's togetherness has a significant bearing on the direction of one's soul. Having togetherness with a humanly-sick lover leads to impoverishment, orphanhood, and weakness (239d-240a; cf. *sunousias* at 232c and 239b), and having togetherness with the unjust turns the soul toward injustice and causes forgetfulness of the true beings (250a; *Laws* 728aff.). By contrast, having togetherness with the true, divinely-inspired lover, who has restrained his lust for pleasure and has learned genuine service (*therapeian, therapeuomenos*, 255a-b) leads to the experience of return-love (*anterōta*, 255e), whereby the beloved's wings are restored. "There is no greater good" than that found in this latter togetherness, when coupled with the prevalence of reason throughout a life, "that either mortal moderation or divine madness can provide a human being" (256b). While togetherness with the wrong company is indeed deleterious, it is not sufficiently so to ensure one's unhappiness, since, minimally, another togetherness can lead one away from these effects (as when Socrates's *daimonion* redirects him from the danger of his "nympholepsis"); likewise, one's togetherness with the right company is indeed beneficial, but not sufficiently so to ensure one's happiness, since, minimally, one has to ensure that one's own soul is rightly ordered (though one's company can certainly help guide one into

a right ordering, as Diotima supposes). In either case, togetherness inclines, but does not guarantee; insofar as bad company can incline one toward unhappiness, we have further reason for thinking that the corruption that comes to be present in the soul need not be there by nature and thus need not indicate an essential distinction between different human types, especially concerning their eschatological prospects.

§5.3. Eschatology and *Diagōgia*

14. Before turning to our final set of arguments against essentializing the Palinode's distinctions and soul-hierarchy (§6), it is worth considering the particular language of the myth's depiction of choice and the effects thereof. To do so, we will briefly consider the myth's utilization of "metempsychosis" ("reincarnation," "transmigration of souls") in its eschatology and then discuss the relevance of Plato's frequent use of *diagein* (leading-through a life) in the myth when depicting that eschatology (especially in terms of giving criteria by which the eschatological judgment is adjudicated and articulating the way in which abiding by—or failing to abide by—those criteria leads to different outcomes).

15. As we suggested in §4.2 above, the myth's temporal structure needn't—and oughtn't—be taken literally, for the myth presents the truth about reality and the human condition through an image. As we discussed in that section, we needn't take the divine ascent and descent as temporally successive motions, since the gods aren't properly temporal beings, even if their activity has temporal effects on temporal beings. A similar set of concerns should be brought to bear on the mythical presentation of metempsychosis.¹³¹ It is noteworthy that

¹³¹ See Perl, *Thinking Being*, 40: "The entire myth of the soul's flight, its fall, and its recollection of what it saw must therefore be understood not as a chronological narrative of the soul's life-history, its movement from one 'world' to another and its experiences in these different worlds, but rather as a mythic

throughout the Platonic corpus, metempsychosis is only ever presented in eschatological myths or as something handed down by tradition. Perhaps Plato did, in fact, believe that metempsychosis or something like it took place (as the majority of his ancient commentators suppose), but, given that myths convey truths about what's ultimate through images which necessarily fall short of the realities they present, it doesn't seem necessary to infer that Plato does uphold some literal view on metempsychosis. Instead, metempsychosis may be a figurative way of presenting a truth about the human condition.¹³²

16. Interpreted allegorically, the myth of metempsychosis is used in the *Phaedrus* to motivate not just the epistemological notion of "recollection" (*anamnēsis*), the fact that knowledge of the true beings is, in some sense, always already available to us, but also the existential and ethical import of a just and well-ordered life, *for this life*.¹³³ In other words, the

representation of different levels of cognitive apprehension." Perl goes on to discuss the related issues in the *Meno* on 48.

¹³² It should be noted that even if the mythic depiction of metempsychosis is not to be understood literally, this need not imply that Plato thereby doesn't uphold a belief in the immortality of the soul. As the 2nd century AD Platonist Atticus notes, belief in the immortality of the soul is practically undisputed by the ancient Platonists: "in fact this is almost the only thing that keeps together his whole body of doctrine [or: movement, *hairesis*]. [...] Absolutely all of Plato's doctrines are fixed to and dependent on the divinity and immortality of the soul—and anyone who does not agree with this overturns the whole of Plato's philosophy" (*Platonist Philosophy*, ch. 9, text Jj; see also Boys-Stones's commentary). The Platonists' consensus on the soul's immortality needs to be qualified in three ways: first, the soul's immortality is restricted to rational souls; second, the nature of the soul's afterlife is in dispute (e.g., first, whether it undergoes metempsychosis or whether it persists in a union with the divine; second, whether such a union erases or preserves individual identity; and third, whether such a union is disembodied or is embodied, as in Christian Platonism); and third, the soul's immortality is a contingent immortality, for ancient Platonists generally recognize that any ontologically dependent, derivative reality (i.e., anything that is not the One), regardless of its innate tendency to persist throughout time if undisturbed, may be destroyed (by divine power, per *Timaeus* 41a-b, cited above) if it acts contrary to the cosmos's providential order.

¹³³ See John Uebersax, "Divinus Plato: Is Plato a Religious Figure?" *Kronos*, Vol 5. (2016), 105; cf. also Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 143-145, especially Griswold's suggestion that the myth of reincarnation and recollection intends to show (when allegorized) that we have access to eternal truth despite our irrefragable temporality. As I understand it, the myth of recollection has two functions: to showcase the immortality of the soul and to safeguard the mind's capacity to know the true beings, the forms. With regard to the latter, a belief in a literal metempsychosis is not required (I would say that such a belief is not required for immortality either, but that would require a longer argument we can't plumb here). Allegorized, we might say that the recollection thesis is designed to indicate that the soul is always already

myth of metempsychosis indicates that *how* one leads-through (*diagein*) one's life, here and now, *matters*, for the way in which we live either opens up or forecloses the possibility of our fulfillment, our happiness, precisely because our fulfillment is found in being directed to that which really *is*, and we can only be so directed when we have well-ordered souls. How we live here and now matters not just for some mythologically-cast speculations about the afterlife but also for the possibility of our fulfillment *in this life*, here and now.¹³⁴

17. A number of commentators have noted that the myth's eschatology can be read immanently to have stronger implications for *this* life beyond the fact that my choices here have a bearing on some abstract, future judgment taking place some thousand years after bodily death.¹³⁵ Burger has captured the immanence of the myth's eschatology particularly well. Commenting on the dramatic action which takes place in the interlude between Socrates's two speeches, Burger writes: "Socrates' knowledge of himself enables him to recognize his sin [242c-d] as a lack of complete vision; in his imitation of self-blinding, *Socrates dramatically reveals that the appropriate punishment for lack of complete vision is identical with the sin itself.*"¹³⁶ The judgment and punishment depicted in the myth as occurring at the end of one's life takes place, in fact, here and now, in each of our actions. The just life is its own reward, and by living justly, we are able to "return" to our true home, which is a recognition of and communion with the "true

in contact with what is to be known; it has all that is to be known already "in it" in a certain sense, but it hasn't brought that knowledge to awareness yet (something which philosophical study, question and answer, and well-tuned images can accomplish). As we'll argue more directly in Ch. 6, the soul is always already in contact with what is to be known because it has always already received reality.

¹³⁴ It is worth noting that by specifying, as Socrates did, that it takes "10,000 years (*etōn muriōn*) to return to the same spot whence she started" (248e), it is possible that Socrates, speaking in a mythological register, intends for his audience to hear the word *muriōi* in its poetic sense of "infinite" (see LSG s.v. A.2) rather than its literal sense of a fixed period of time (see LSG s.v. II). If so, the message might take on a much, much stronger form: unless you *become* a philosopher and live justly, you will remain wingless for the rest of time.

¹³⁵ See, e.g., Perl, "Sense-Perception and Intellect in Plato," 26.

¹³⁶ Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 34-35; emphasis added. Cf. 47. Cornell makes a similar point about the immanent eschatology of the blindness under discussion; see "Reinventing Love," 33.

beings;” the just life allows us to recognize the immanence of the “true beings” in our experience. By contrast, the one who lives unjustly, in a way which doesn’t bear witness to the truth about truth, fails to follow Socrates in avoiding both the sin and the punishment, which the sin itself is, as Burger indicates in her discussion of the nonlover’s punitive subterranean journey:

The journey beneath the earth, which represents the victory of the subhuman, is thus identified as the fate of the nonlover praised in the previous speeches. Just as banishment from the truth and the corresponding absence of love are presented as both causing the human fall and identical with the punishment itself, so the narrowness of mortal prudence is not simply the cause of some subsequent punishment, but the very nature of that punishment as experienced in human life.¹³⁷

By living like a beast—by living a life which isn’t ordered by the human soul’s rational capacity—as the nonlover does insofar as he has enslaved his rational capacity to his lust for pleasure, one imitates the irrational animal’s incapacity to be in rational communion with the truth and thus separates oneself from that with which it is proper for the human soul to be in communion. If it is nearness to truth which makes a god divine, it is distance from truth which makes an animal an animal; human beings can incline themselves toward nearness or distance, and the effects of that inclination are realized, here and now, in the way in which we live.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibid., 68-69. Likewise, see Jones and Marechal, “Plato’s Guide to Living with Your Body,” 95-97, and Ficino, *Commentary*, VIII.3

¹³⁸ Likewise, see *Theaetetus* 176e-177a: As Socrates says to Theaetetus, “there are patterns, my friend, established in the very being of things, of the divine as most happy and of the godless as most miserable, but not seeing that this is how it is, through their folly and utter senselessness, these people are unaware that they are making themselves like the latter by their unjust actions, and unlike the former. So they pay the penalty for it by living a life in the image of what they’ve become like, but if we say to them that, unless they get rid of their cleverness, even when they’re dead that place that’s unsoiled by evils will not receive them, but they will always hold in themselves the likeness of their way of life, evil joined in living with evil, they, since they’re clever and shameless in every way, will hear these things as coming from some sort of senseless people.” One is rewarded or penalized for one’s actions here and now by becoming an image of that toward which they lead, and if one inclined toward injustice and dissolution doesn’t lead-around his character, he will consign himself to evil *always*. See also Dionysius, *Divine Names* 720b-c and Boethius, *Consolation* IV.3.

18. A well-ordered soul is one in which reason takes the rein (*bēniobēsis*), directing the whole soul toward that which is worth following, the gods, who lead us to that which leads all, really real reality, and a poorly-ordered soul is one in which reason becomes subservient to and dragged around by the soul's motive powers, which lead us, when unchecked, into dissolution and impotence. Regardless of our thrownness in one manner of life or another, happiness is possible for us if we get ourselves in order and direct ourselves, with appropriate guidance, to what really matters and then bear witness to our recognition of what really matters in a consistent way of life. No one is prohibited by nature from experiencing the divinely erotic madness that *is* philosophy, and all must undergo the same process of ordering one's soul and leading a just life if one is to experience the effects of love and philosophy.

19. Each of the uses of *diagein* in the *Phaedrus* reflect the existential import of leading-through one's life well. As we noted above, the one who leads-through justly has a better portion, and the one who does so unjustly has a worse portion (248e). Souls who lead-through justly are themselves "uplifted" by justice and lead-through an afterlife worthy of the life they led (249a). Commenting on the lovers' relationship, Socrates states that "if the better parts of discursive thinking prevail, as they lead (*agagonta*) toward a regimented life and a love of wisdom, then all involved enjoy (*diagousin*) a blessed and harmonious life (*bion*) here on earth" (256a-b; emphasis added). Even, as we just noted, those who "adopt a more coarse way of life, one that loves honor and not wisdom [...] go through life (*diagousi*) as friends with each other, although not so close as the philosophic couple [...]. It is the law for those who have already begun their journey in lower heaven that they shall not return to the dark path under the earth, but shall lead (*diagontas*) a bright life in blessed journeys with each other" (256c-e). The five uses of *diagein* in the Palinode, then, indicate that how one lives matters, for the afterlife,

whatever it is, but also *here and now*.¹³⁹ We live well by living justly and ensuring that thought prevails over our motive impulses. To the extent that we do so, we are able to partake of the wing's "natural capacity (*pephuken dunamis*) to lead upward (*agein ano*) what is weighty" (246d; translation modified), by "re-climbing up (*anagein ano*) the long circuitous paths" (272d; translation modified), leading-back (*anagein ano*) our speech to truth.

20. The two uses of *diagein* which occur outside the Palinode (259d, 276d) both call the reader back to the 'diagogic' claims of the Palinode. In the first instance, Socrates describes how the Cicadas report back to Kalliope and Ourania, the eldest of the Muses, about "those who have gone through life loving wisdom (*en philosophiai diagontas*) and honoring their musical art" (259d). The myth of the Cicadas itself serves as a warning for us to be on guard in our conversations against being captivated by the pleasures of *logoi* (259c). Simply hearing the Palinode's myth is insufficient; we must lead-through a life bearing witness to the metaphysical vision the myth discloses. "For many reasons, then, we must say something and not fall asleep at the noon-hour" (259d).¹⁴⁰ We must live a life of bearing witness to the truth, the truth that has never been nor ever shall be *adequately* hymned, in our speaking.

¹³⁹ It is noteworthy that Socrates only specifies the value present in our earthly lives of leading-through a well-ordered life when he is talking about the lives of the philosophical couple. This could be taken to indicate, contrary to the common charge that the Platonic ideal is an escape from embodiment, that it is the philosophical soul which *enjoys* the embodied life most thoroughly. The second best couple, who love honor rather than wisdom, have an incomplete happiness while on earth because of their imperfect ordering and don't begin to approach blessedness until they depart earthly life.

¹⁴⁰ In *Listening to the Cicadas*, Ferrari gives an excellent (albeit incomplete, as I'll argue in succeeding chapters) analysis of Plato's use of the myth of the Cicadas to highlight the dangers of just such a carnal love of *logoi*, for Phaedrus, the "impresario," is predisposed to a love of intellectual talk for the mere pleasure to be had in engaging in "lofty discussion." Phaedrus needs to hear the Cicadas' warning, for he is himself in danger of repeating their mistake. See 25-34. Ferrari's analysis supports my claims about what Plato's 'diagogic' language in the context of the *Phaedrus* is supposed to indicate, for the "ascent" offered in the Palinode—the vision of reality itself—is not complete until one makes the corresponding "descent" by living-through one's life in accordance with what one saw, bearing witness to it in all of one's actions.

21. In the second instance, Socrates describes how the philosophical writer, who “sows his gardens of written words in the joy of play,” will write in order “to build up a treasure trove of reminders (*hupommēmata*) both for himself [...] and for all who walk down the same path (*ichnos metionti*) [...]. But when others indulge themselves in other kinds of play, finding pleasure in drinking parties and whatever is related to these, our man, it seems, instead of this kind of play will engage (*diaxein*) in the things I’ve just mentioned” (276d). Just as the myth of the Cicadas warns us against being taken captive by the pleasures found in words, so the myth of the invention of writing warns us against being taken captive by the apparent permanence and codified wisdom of written words. In each case, the one who leads-through her life well will avoid the temptation by recognizing the hierarchy of values and acting accordingly throughout her life. The witness we must bear is one which must be led-through for a whole life; written documentation thereof is, by itself, insufficient.

22. By using *diagein*, rather than a phrase involving other terms for living (e.g., *bios*, *bioō*) and other terms specifying the manner in which one lives (e.g., *tropos*), Plato subtly makes a profound point: the way in which one lives is *directly* related to the ordering of one’s soul, both internally (which aspect of the soul is “hegemonic”) and externally (by which gods we are led, and to where). By continuing to use etymologically connected terms in this way, Plato deploys the resources of his language and utilizes his audience’s aural attunement to connect otherwise disparate ideas through a kind of associating resonance,¹⁴¹ similar to the way in which Platonic

¹⁴¹ On this point, see Scully, *Phaedrus*, 89: “The *Phaedrus* is no less a work of art than a philosophical text, and a full reading of the dialogue requires literary skills of tracing verbal repetition and imagistic patterning. As with poetry, word and image gain in meaning as they re-echo in the dialogue.” See also Gordon, *Plato’s Erotic World*, 61 and Lebeck, “Central Myth,” 272, note 12. To give an indication of what the dialogue would sound like to a Greek but which tends to be obscured in English translation since *agein* is polysemic and since a consistent translation would lead to infelicities in English, we can restate the dialogue’s message as follows: what is genuine, then, is that leading-through (*diagein*) one’s life well requires having one’s rational capacity lead (*agein*, *hēniochein*) the whole soul by being led (*agesthai*,

etymologies don't intend to trace a factual history of the development of our words, but, instead, intend to (re-)link things that *ought* to be linked conceptually or to show how our “vulgar” language has failed to retain the conceptual linkages that were originally present in the language of the “ancients.”¹⁴² Etymology, after all, is, as the word itself suggests, about *genuineness* (*etumos*), about what's true of the nature of reality, even if factual historical developments don't reflect what's genuine.¹⁴³ But, more importantly, since leading-through (*diagein*) is conceptually built atop leading (*agein*), it involves in its concept the same locative logic present in leading—that is, like leading, leading-through always involves a leader leading that which is led from somewhere to somewhere. By using *diagein* instead of something like *bioō*, Plato grafts the “whither and whence” (227a) aspect of leading into the very notion of our lives, and so the evaluation of a life necessarily requires a discernment about the value of

hepasthanai) by the gods, especially Zeus, the great leader (*hēgemōn*) in heaven, toward really real reality; by doing so, we can be, alongside the gods, led-around (*periagein*) the periphery of the heavens to partake in a circumspection of the ultimate truth to which we have been led; having been led to the truth, we can be led-back (*anagein anō*) to it in memory; we can ensure that we are so led-back by ensuring that we lead-through our lives well; likewise, we can help lead others up and back to truth through soul-leading (*psuchagōgia*) love and language. Doing so is the task of a life led-through well, which spends its time leading-through (*diēgēsis*; 246a) accounts of what the soul is and how the soul can be led well. These are the arguments Phaedrus has asked Socrates to lead-out (*paragein*; 261a), which happened at the leading-down place (*katagōgē*, *katagōgion*; 230b, 259a), to which Socrates was led-as-a-stranger (*xenagōgeō*; 230c), after Socrates and Phaedrus bantered about leadin each other on (*proagein*) around (*periagein*) all of Attica.

¹⁴² See David Sedley, “The Etymologies in Plato’s *Cratylus*,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 118 (1998), 145: For Plato and Aristotle, “the success of an interpretation is measured more by the profundity of the meaning it discovers than by the analytic rigour with which it demonstrates it.” Cf. 150-152; likewise, Gordon, *Plato’s Erotic World*, 59-60 and White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 68. Dariusz Karłowicz contextualizes Platonic etymology within the pervasive suspicion among ancient and medieval thinkers that there was primordial experience of reality written into language, which has been corrupted over time with the development of historical languages, but which can be rediscovered through working back through the layers of “sedimentation” to the original, unified experience; see *Socrates and Other Saints: Early Christian Understandings of Reason and Philosophy*, trans. Artur Sebastian Rosman (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 22. Likewise, Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 117. See also Michael Davis, *The Soul of the Greeks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 194.

¹⁴³ *Etumos*, from which “etymology” comes, is used three times in the *Phaedrus*—and amidst Plato’s entire corpus only appears in the *Phaedrus*—to refer to what is genuine and true in contradistinction to popular misunderstandings; see 243a, 244a, and 260e.

the directedness, the *worthiness* (*axios* = *agein* + *-tios*) of that life.¹⁴⁴ *Every* life is under the spell of some soul-leading (*tis psuchagōgia*) since every life is, implicitly or explicitly, directed to and oriented around some primary love, and thus that to which a soul is being led is a matter of concern for every life led-through. Socrates’s whole life is—and, as he hopes, his whole death will be—a life led-through (*diagein*) in the examination of those around him concerning whether their lives were led by wisdom or by the mere pretense to wisdom (*Apology* 41b).¹⁴⁵ One could say that it is a life spent trying to accomplish that “altogether in every way divine (*theias*) and long leading-through (*diēgēseōs*) of what sort the form (*idea*) of the soul is” (246a; my translation) by which one can come to know what sort one is, some hundred-headed beast like Typhon, or something simpler, “having a share by nature (*phusei*) of the divine (*theias*) and un’Typhonic” (230a).¹⁴⁶

§6. Distinction 3: The God One Follows

1. We turn now to the last of the three possible ways of licensing an essentializing distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical souls, as articulated in §2.2 above. In addition to the distinctions between 1. the corrupt and the recently-initiated soul and 2. the philosophers and the other eight soul-types, as parceled out by the Inescapable Law, there is a third way of distinguishing souls: by the god one followed in the cosmic circuit. Zeus-followers are specifically distinguished from Ares-followers, Hera-followers, and Apollo-

¹⁴⁴ See also Gordon’s remarks about the etymological connection between *hegeisthai* and *agein*: “in Greek those who believe [*hegeisthai*] are those who are led or guided [*agein*] [...]. Guides are those who lead us in a way of living, a way of dying, and also through and to (or away from) belief” (*Plato’s Erotic World*, 203).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. the uses of *diagein* at *Phaedo* 81a, *Republic* 344e, and VII.335d.

¹⁴⁶ While some commentators, like Griswold, take the reference to the necessity for divinity at 246a to indicate that an account of the *idea* of the soul is fundamentally impossible for us (or, as he goes on to suggest, impossible *per se*, because there is no such thing as an *idea* of the soul, but only its actions and passions, its *erga te kai pathē*; cf. *Self-Knowledge*, 81, 89; likewise, see Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 74-75), such an inference is unnecessary, as Ferrari has noted (*Listening to the Cicadas*, 120).

followers (252c-253c), and the initial presentation of the distinction seems meaningful, since the Zeus-followers are noble, philosophical by nature, and characterized by their leadership (*hēgemonikos*, 252e; on account of following Zeus, who is called the great *hēgemōn* at 246e), whereas the Ares-followers, at least, seem prone to homicide and murderous self-sacrifice (252c-d).

2. Details about the other gods are sparing, but the distinction between the characteristics of Zeus-followers and Ares-followers, coupled with the way by which each soul cleaves to the god it follows in its life, activities, and choice of beloved (252d), would seem to indicate that this distinction is not incidental. Given the logical flow of the speech, and given the reference to Zeus and Ganymede (255c) at the crucial moment in which return-love is introduced, it would seem natural to assume that the description of the lover and beloved, who jointly “enjoy (*diagousin*) a blessed and harmonious life here on earth” on account of the prevalence of thought in their lives and on account of the enslavement of “what enables viciousness” and liberation of “what allows excellence” in the soul (256a-b), is a description of the Zeus-following pair. This suspicion is only strengthened by the comparison with the second best pair, who “adopt a more coarse way of life, one that loves honor and not wisdom” (256c); it would seem that we are comparing the Zeus-followers—wisdom-loving by nature (252e)—to some followers of an inferior god, like Ares.

3. So, we ask again, does this most recent way of distinguishing souls into various types lead to essential distinctions or to some kind of distinction that is relativized within the essential distinction between the human type as compared to animality and divinity, as we argued in prior sections? Further, does the distinction even matter, insofar as some

commentators, at least, think that there are, in truth, no Zeus-like souls¹⁴⁷ Or does the dialogue give resources for relativizing this distinction as well?

4. In addition to the claims already made in prior sections—namely, that choice is involved in one’s way of life (as indicated again at 252d) and that, when we look carefully, the affirmations about the successful pair of lovers do not require the lovers to be Zeus-followers by nature, but only that they’ve successfully ordered their souls, both internally and externally (cf. 252d, particularly the fact that one can remain “uncorrupted” in one’s first incarnation regardless of the god he chose)—we can say here that the locative logic of leading and following used to describe the divine procession undercuts any would-be essentializing distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical souls, which would, if it were present, indicate that these different soul-types have essentially different and non-negotiable eschatological prospects. As we’ve noted above, Zeus is described as “the great leader” (*ho megas hēgemōn*) of heaven, who “goes first” (*prōtos porenetai*),

“arranging everything thoroughly (*diakosmōn panta*)¹⁴⁸ and taking care of it (*epimeloumenos*). An army of gods and daemons follow (*hepetai*) him, arranged in eleven contingents because Hestia, goddess of the Hearth, remains alone in the house of the gods. The other gods, arranged in a group of twelve, ruling (*archontes*), lead (*hēgountai*) according to the arrangement in which each is arranged.” (246e-247a; translation modified)

If Zeus *leads* all, and not only leads all but thoroughly arranges and takes care of all, and if the other gods and their retinues *follow* Zeus, then it would seem, by the transitivity implicit in the

¹⁴⁷ See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 128, 131.

¹⁴⁸ The fact that Socrates uses the compound verb *diakosmeō* rather than its uncompounded root *kosmeō* here is significant, for the *dia-* prefix indicates the thoroughness of Zeus’s role in ordering the cosmos. Zeus doesn’t just order the cosmos, but thoroughly orders it, through and through, from the highest to the lowest elements. Benardete misreads this section markedly on account of his prior claim that the gods do not care for human souls (as noted above), for, as he claims, Zeus “orders everything throughout heaven, but he does not order the army,” and he concludes from this that “the cosmos is loosely ordered. It has parts, but no part is ordered, and all the parts do not form a whole” (*Rhetoric of Morality*, 139). But this reading belies the logic and verbum of the text, for it ignores the *dia-* prefix and ignores or modifies without argument the *panta* object of *diakosmeō*.

leading-relation, that to follow any of the gods simply *is* to follow Zeus, albeit at a remove and with a degree of mediation.¹⁴⁹ The ultimate whither is the same, even if, perhaps, the character of one's journey is modified by one's choice in following behind this god rather than that god.¹⁵⁰

5. One's choice to follow one of the other gods beside Zeus rather than Zeus does not change one's ultimate whither, nor does it on its own indicate that one will be less likely to arrive at that whither (for each of the gods who follow Zeus have no difficulty in getting to the superheavenly place, and so there seems to be no reason why we should have more difficulty getting there on account of following Ares who follows Zeus rather than following Zeus, at least not in principle). To be in the retinue simply *is* to be led by Zeus (and thus also by that which leads Zeus, reality itself); any distinctions within one's journey are relativized by the fact that all things are led by Zeus, even if some are more mediately led than others. Notably, Socrates does say that upon looking upon "beauty in its radiance when in a blessed chorus-dance *we* in Zeus' entourage, *and others* in the company of other gods, witnessed a blest sight and spectacle and we were initiated into what it is lawful to call the most blest of the mysteries" (250b; emphasis added). Those who follow the other gods can, then, behold beauty in its radiance and thus be conveyed by earthly images of beauty back to Beauty itself, by which their wings are nourished; the fact that one follows Zeus to this "blest sight" specifically by following an inferior god does not, in any way, diminish one's capacity to behold beauty and

¹⁴⁹ See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 186-187, who tracks this implication and notes further that even following the Muses is a way of following Zeus (such an implication would cause us to reconsider Socrates's anti-erotic speech's opening line, "Lead, O Muses," as we'll discuss in Ch. 5). Sallis tracks the further implication that by being Zeus-like, Socrates can imitate Zeus's way of leading the gods to the divine banquet by leading human beings to the human banquet of recollection (see *Being and Logos*, 155-156), a point to which we'll return in Ch. 4.

¹⁵⁰ See also Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 224.

thus be transported back to really real reality, the nourishing source. Insofar as the second-best life discussed above, which loves honor rather than wisdom, is spoken of in terms of one's choices rather than one's nature, it seems perfectly plausible, in line with our arguments above, that such a life could be led-through by one who follows any god, for, as we argued above, even the philosophical souls can fail to choose to live philosophically, especially if they suffer some misfortune or come into some kind of what we might call "kakogogic" togetherness (i.e., a togetherness which leads one toward evil).

6. Since all gods follow Zeus, and so all human souls who follow gods (and that's all of us) follow Zeus either directly or mediately to the place where Zeus goes—to be led around (*periagei*, 247c) the superheavenly periphery whereby one gazes upon the whole of truth—any relevant distinctions between following one god or another, or between following any of the gods besides Zeus and following Zeus, are relativized within the fundamental humanity of all souls following Zeus (again, whether immediately or mediately) and seeing the truth (whereby they can see according to form, as we discussed above). Is the distinction between following Zeus and following Ares meaningless, then? No, for as we saw above, Ares-followers are prone to certain vices (homicide, murderous self-sacrifice), even if they are *essentially* no different from Zeus-followers when they follow Ares *justly*. But if Zeus-followers can also fall into injustice (and, we should note, Zeus-followers, though perhaps least prone to falling into injustice, are most diabolical of all when they do, for the "perfect" tyrant is in all ways most like the perfect philosopher except in the direction of his love, and thereby is unlike the philosopher in being impotent to acquire what he really wants and thereby unlike the philosopher in being furthest from happiness). So, minimally, the specification of one's character by one's choice of god may lead to tendencies toward different temptations toward

various forms of injustice, just as tyrannizing desire has “many limbs and many forms” (238a). Given the transitivity implied in the leading-relation, we can even go so far as to say that by presenting the possibility of following different gods, who all jointly follow Zeus, Plato makes a place for a kind of pluralism-within-objective-truth. While the goal is unitary, there is, in fact, some variability in one’s choice of means, so long as any choice of means is bound to justice. While there are objective criteria (namely, justice) for determining whether one’s choice of a life to lead-through (*diagein*) will be worthy-of-leading (*axios = ag-tios*), there is some place for loving-differently within loving-rightly.¹⁵¹ And so, we can say, there is no essential distinction built into soul-types, for the corrupt can be healed, the non-philosopher can choose to live justly and thereby aspire to philosophy, and the non-Zeus-follower can, following Zeus indirectly, love rightly. Any claim otherwise is *an ignoble lie*.

¹⁵¹ On this point, see M. Dyson, “Zeus and Philosophy in the Myth of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1982), 308; likewise, Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 84-85. See also Schindler’s discussion of Robert Muller’s account of Platonic ethics: “Muller thus concludes that Plato’s ethics can be summed up by varying the well-known phrase from Augustine: it is not a directive to do one thing or another in particular, but rather a claim about how all shall be done: ‘Be good, and do what you will!’” (*Freedom From Reality*, 312).

Ch. 4: The Metaphysical Orientation of Love 1: The Lovers' Formations

"We must be led to this good by those who love us, and we must lead those whom we love to it."
—Augustine, *City of God*, X.3

"Love creates equalities; it doesn't search for them."
—Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*, XIV¹

§1. Whither Does Love Lead?

§1.1. Where We've Been and Where We're Going

1. Given the centrality of this chapter within this project as a whole, a brief review of how we've gotten here and where we are going will be helpful, so that we don't lose sight of the through-line of the interpretation of the *Phaedrus* we are proposing. In Chapter 1, I argued that soul-leading is the long-sought unity of the *Phaedrus* and that soul-leading (*ψυχαγωγία*, *psuchē + agein*) can't be adequately understood without reference to the semantic network of leading (*agein* and *agein*-compounds) and following (*hepasthai*) which permeates the dialogue. In Chapter 2, I argued that the speeches on love in the *Phaedrus* disclose to us the ways by which we can come into communion with Being—or fail to do so. The speeches indicate that the possibility of coming into communion with Being is predicated on introducing an internal harmony to the soul by ensuring that the soul is *led* by the right internal leading-principle. Chapter 2 also discussed the ways in which the soul's disorder prevents us from coming into such a communion: the soul is disordered when it fails to be unifiedly led internally by reason and when it fails to be led externally, as a whole, toward Being. When the soul is disordered, it pursues what we called "reality-resistant" goods (or, at least, it pursues genuine goods in a way that is misaligned with reality), with the result that the soul actively undermines its own flourishing and happiness because such reality-resistant goods fail to satisfy the soul's deepest

¹ Cited by Jennifer Whiting in "Love: Self-Propagation, Self-Preservation, or *Ekstasis*?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (2013), 422.

yearnings and desires. Further, such a disordered soul can misdirect the two primary ways by which the soul can be led to Being—love and language—by redirecting them toward reality-resistant goods. As Socrates’s anti-erotic speech shows, humanly-mad “love” is actually a sickness driven by envy, jealousy, and a rapacious desire for pleasure. In their resistance to any measure, such a love damages both lover and beloved. Similarly, artless rhetoric, as depicted in Lysias’s speech, uses language for the sake of pleasure, power, or some other measure-resistant end and thereby leads both speaker and auditor into (self) deception. The soul can only flourish by pursuing ends suitable to it, with due measure.

2. Chapter 2 indicated that the soul can be redirected and healed so that it may come into communion with “really real reality,” but it did not yet clarify *how* one could accomplish the harmonization and reorientation of the soul. Before confronting this question directly, Chapter 3 sought to establish that the resolution to the question of how the soul can commune with reality about to be proposed would have universal scope (i.e., be true for all human souls). Accordingly, Chapter 3 addressed the question of whether the Palinode’s various ways of distinguishing and hierarchizing different soul-types amount to any kind of essentializing distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical souls. The Palinode categorizes souls into types in three ways: 1. whether they are corrupt or have been “recently initiated” into the sight of Being, 2. where they fall into the nine-fold hierarchy of lives given under the heading of the “Inescapable Law,” and 3. which god they followed during their cosmic journey toward the superheavenly place. I argued that none of these categorizations implies an essential distinction *within* human nature; rather, all three ways of categorizing souls categorize them along quantitative or non-hierarchical lines rather than qualitatively. Each of the categorizations is relativized by the more governing distinction between human souls, the souls

of non-rational animals, and divine souls. The arguments of Chapter 3 are, as we'll see, necessary prolegomena for the argument at the heart (§3) of this chapter.

3. In this chapter I clarify why soul-leading, especially in its erotic form, *must* have a fundamentally metaphysical orientation (the meaning of which I discuss below). For reasons about to be discussed, I focus here only on the necessity of a metaphysical orientation of love. In Chapter 6, I turn, briefly, to the necessity of the same metaphysical orientation for language, in which I will seek to reinterpret the dialogue's account of language (with special reference to writing) according to the metaphysical vision articulated in that chapter.

4. Whereas Chapter 5 will consider how the dialogue's drama reflects the argument of this chapter, Chapter 6 will pick up the argument from where this chapter leaves off. This chapter focuses on the role love plays in the lovers' formations, as we'll discuss especially in §3 (the dramatization of which we'll discuss in the next chapter). Chapter 6 will complete the argument set up in this chapter (see §3.1) by assessing the greater Love-context (cosmic, divine, ontological) within which interpersonal love is situated and to which interpersonal love is relativized. Over the course of this chapter and Chapter 6, we will clarify the proper ends of the soul and how the soul can pursue them well. The soul's ultimate end, to which all other ends are subordinated, is communion with Being; achieving this end (to the extent possible for human beings) promotes the soul's flourishing. Whereas this chapter focuses on the anthropological features that must obtain in order for the soul to be led into communion with Being, Chapter 6 will specify the corresponding metaphysical features that must obtain in order for that communion to take place. In other words, the soul has to have certain features (features which have already begun to emerge in Chapter 2 and which will emerge more clearly in this chapter) and Being itself has to have a certain kind of character in order for the soul to

meet Being in a genuine communion, wherein each “party” comes together without either party being subsumed by the other. As we’ll discuss, Being is neither “static” nor “indifferent” to the beings, but instead can be characterized by a generosity and care that ecstatically—“katabatically” (“going downwardly”)—overflows out of Being’s plenitude.² Being “calls” us to itself through its radiant self-manifestation in the iconic images which are the beings of our experience. When properly ordered—that is, when reason leads the soul by being led by the gods and Being itself—the soul can be led through those iconic images back to their source in an act of recollection. As we’ll see in this chapter as well as Chapter 6, Beauty has a privileged role in this process on account of its “radiance.”

§1.2. Practical Dimensions of Soul-Leading and the Need for Metaphysical

Reorientation

5. As I noted in Chapter 1, a few commentators, such as Elizabeth Asmis and Jessica Moss, have argued that soul-leading (*psuchagogia*) is the long sought-after unity of the *Phaedrus*. In Chapter 1, I argued that these commentators have correctly specified the unity of the *Phaedrus*, for soul-leading is a unifying theme with sufficient conceptual breadth and dramatic pervasiveness to account not only for the unity of the *Phaedrus*, but also for the essential insights concerning the dialogue which have emerged from other attempts to unify the dialogue. As the two main defenders of this account have noted, the two most prominent themes of the dialogue—rhetoric and love (*erōs*)—are both characterized as “psychagogic” activities. Though I argued that Asmis and Moss correctly specified the unity of the *Phaedrus* as soul-leading in Chapter 1, I did not address either of their approaches directly; this I’ll do

² Admittedly, this formulation sounds like an anachronistic imposition of later developments within the Platonic tradition. In Ch. 6, I will justify these claims on the basis of the *Phaedrus* itself.

in §2-3 of this chapter. I argue that although Asmis and Moss have correctly specified the unity of the *Phaedrus* as soul-leading, neither gives an adequate account of soul-leading on account of their respective focuses.

6. Both scholars approach soul-leading primarily from a practical perspective, by which I mean that both authors' concerns tend to revolve around questions about the qualities of our interpersonal activities rather than around questions concerning the natures of things. Asmis's argument focuses on Plato's reevaluation and revision of the rhetorical art in relation to competing contemporary accounts of rhetorical practices (i.e., those of Gorgias, Lysias, and Isocrates). Moss situates both forms of soul-leading within Plato's greater philosophical project of converting souls and evaluates the relative effectiveness by which rhetoric and love can redirect the soul to the good life. While both authors acknowledge that truth is the soul's destination, their concern is more for how we get there than what we discover when we arrive. The *nature* of truth, and our receptive relation to it, is left underdetermined in both accounts. Though Asmis and Moss do present us with significant insights concerning the *Phaedrus*, neither interpretation is adequate to the dialogue's understanding of soul-leading because both omit deeper metaphysical reflection on what love and language *are* and how these psychagogic activities relate to the "true beings" (*ta ontōs ontā*) in the "superheavenly place."

7. In what follows, I will first review the contributions made by Asmis and Moss to our understanding of Platonic soul-leading before moving on to my own account of the necessity of appreciating the metaphysical orientation of soul-leading. Neither "metaphysical"

nor “orientation” are univocal terms, and so I will briefly explain here what I mean by them before moving on to the main argument I will develop in the rest of this chapter.³

8. By contrasting a “metaphysical” orientation, context, or dimension with a “practical” orientation, context, or dimension, I do *not* mean that I take Plato to hold to some kind of “two-worlds” theory, wherein the “physical world” or “world of appearances” is set *alongside* and contrasted with the “real world” or the “realm of the forms.” Sometimes the terms “metaphysical” and “practical” are contrasted along these lines, as if there were a “practical world” (or worse yet, “physical world”) in contradistinction to a “metaphysical world,”⁴ even though this juxtaposition risks a deep philosophical confusion: to distinguish the “physical world” from the “metaphysical world” as two distinct “realms” implies that metaphysics, the science of being *qua* being, doesn’t take the “physical world” as one of its objects of study; correlatively, that which makes up the “physical world” would not be among the beings. The ontology of radiance discussed here and developed in Chapter 6 should, I think, be sufficient to clarify why Plato’s ontology does not fall into this kind of “two-worlds” theory, even though a proper account of Platonic ontology does recognize an important ontological distinction between forms and their instances.⁵

³ Disambiguating disputed terms is, of course, something Socrates recommends in the *Phaedrus*, both at the beginning of his anti-erotic speech (cf. 237b-d) and when he discusses the preliminaries to practicing the rhetorical art (cf. 263a-c). Socrates and Phaedrus agree on placing love (*erōs*) in the disputed class (263c); given the arguments of this chapter and in Chapter 2 above, we must do the same.

⁴ As we see, for example, Lebeck do; see “Central Myth,” 268.

⁵ In addition to Chapter 6, see Perl, *Thinking Being*, ch. 2, sections 2-4; Perl, “The Presence of the Paradigm: Immanence and Transcendence in Plato’s Theory of Forms,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1999); and D. C. Schindler, “What’s the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in Plato, Plotinus, and Aquinas,” *Nova et Vetera*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2007) for similar articulations of Platonic metaphysics, which recognizes that there are important ontological distinctions to be made between form and instance without postulating that each has its own “realm.” Plato himself articulates some of the difficulties with a *misunderstanding* of the ontological distinction between form and instance as a distinction of two different equally subsistent beings in the beginning of the *Parmenides* (“the Third Man argument”). See also Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 133-137, who also notes that Plato’s “artful

9. Nevertheless, it is meaningful to distinguish between practical and metaphysical *orientations* (or approaches, contexts, dimensions, etc.) insofar as one can look at the same object of study from different points of view.⁶ A metaphysical orientation looks at the matter at hand in terms of its being (its nature, its essence, its quiddity or whatness, its propria and essential attributes, etc.) and in terms of how this being relates to Being as such, globally, whereas a practical orientation looks at the matter at hand in terms of how it relates to other beings, regionally. The first claim, then, that I advance here is that we need to look at soul-leading in terms of what it *is* (i.e., the natures of love and language) and in terms of how it relates to and is contextualized by Being, and not just in terms of how well different types of soul-leading accomplish their tasks (as Moss does) or how different types of soul-leading can be distinguished from false or inadequate versions of themselves (as Asmis does).

10. However, the word “orientation” in the phrase “metaphysical orientation” is equivocal, and multiple senses of the word are relevant for the argument of this chapter. In addition to “looking at the matter at hand from the perspective of metaphysics,” I also mean by “metaphysical orientation” a stance which is “ordered toward Being” more primarily than toward beings. Accordingly, the second claim that I advance in this chapter is that we need to correctly specify that toward which the soul is led if we are to understand soul-leading adequately (though the argument won’t be completed until Chapter 6). The soul, I claim, is

creation of literary images belies any metaphysics, commonly imputed to him, which valorizes the invisible over the visible or devalues the image in relation to some higher reality” (133).

⁶ Similarly, see the references in the prior note for a discussion of how perception and intellection are two different modes of apprehending being rather than two distinct faculties distinguished by the different objects they apprehend (Perl discusses the matter in more depth in *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007], ch. 6). My distinction between practical and metaphysical orientations is akin to the distinction of different modes of apprehending the same thing (form *as* itself, “itself by itself,” apprehended by intellection vs. form as differentiated, radiant image, apprehended *in* a particular formed thing, by perception).

more primordially oriented toward Being than toward beings, though, as I will discuss in §4, understanding the relationship between the soul's "toward whiches" hierarchically need not imply understanding that relationship antagonistically. The soul is led *both* to Being and to beings as ends, but the soul can't find itself in a genuine communion with *a* being without also coming into communion with Being. This chapter, then, anticipates Chapter 6's reflections on the soul's communion with Being, for in that chapter, we will clarify how the soul's prior communion with Being is, in a certain sense, a necessary condition for the soul's genuine communion with beings (particularly, human communion, especially in terms of interpersonal love). Approaching soul-leading from a metaphysical orientation in the first sense (i.e., looking at the matter at hand in terms of its nature and relation to Being) reveals why we need to foreground the metaphysical orientation of soul-leading in the second sense (i.e., that the soul is to be led to Being) even when considering the question practically (i.e., how soul-leading can be used interpersonally).

11. Insufficient attention to the metaphysical orientation of soul-leading leads, I claim, to a lopsided treatment of psychagogic rhetoric as more discussion-worthy than psychagogic love.⁷ Asmis barely discusses love in her account of soul-leading, focusing instead on "Plato's

⁷ A number of readings of the Phaedrus do basically take love to be nothing more than an interesting or evocative subject for demonstrating rhetorical prowess rather than as part of the philosophical content of the dialogue. As we noted in Ch. 1, Schleiermacher rightfully warns against relativizing either love to rhetoric or rhetoric to love; see *Introductions*, 49-51, 56. Further, there is a somewhat common trend in recent scholarship to either ignore, excise, or deflate the metaphysical dimensions of the dialogues on account of a persistent suspicion that Platonic metaphysics (or "Platonism") is bunk. Many of those who both accept a Nietzschean, Heideggerian, Derridean, Deleuzean, etc. critique of "Platonism" or "Western metaphysics" and also read Plato welcomingly end up deflating the putatively Platonic metaphysical claims in order to "save Plato from Platonism." Paradigmatically, Rosen responds to the criticism levied by Derrida in "Plato's Pharmacy" by saying "there is no ontology in Plato" ("Platonic Hermeneutics," *Essays in Philosophy: Ancient*, 365); i.e., Rosen saves Plato from the Derridean critique by *granting the terms* of the critique and arguing that Plato doesn't fall prey to them rather than by showing that the terms of the critique ought to be disputed (as, e.g., Catherine Pickstock does in *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998], ch. 1). Jan Zwicky provides a consummate example of the tension one encounters if one finds some point in Plato compelling yet is

new definition of rhetoric as a certain ‘psychagogia’” (cf. 271a).⁸ Moss, on the other hand, devotes considerable time to explaining how love can function as a soul-leading activity, but concludes that Plato develops an art of psychagogic rhetoric to replace interpersonal love as Plato’s primary means of philosophical conversion, since artful rhetoric is just “as effective as interpersonal love but without love’s limitations.”⁹ Neither of these accounts adequately recognizes, however, the more fundamental significance of love within Plato’s understanding of the human condition. I argue below that we can only appreciate this significance by locating love within its metaphysical context as disclosed by the Palinode.¹⁰ More fundamentally, love simply *is* the core of the human experience, and so the whole of our experience is dramatically inflected by the direction of our love. Any account which overlooks the centrality of love to

skeptical of the metaphysical baggage attached to it, for Zwicky suggests that we can retain Plato’s grounding of philosophy in *erōs* while rejecting Plato’s “ontological apparatus.” See “Plato’s *Phaedrus*: Philosophy as Dialogue with the Dead,” *Apeiron*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997), 41-42. Coming from a similar position, Nicholas Pappas claims that “Even the promise of erotic ennoblement that emerges from the great myth needs to be read with suspicion” (“Telling Good Love from Bad in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 32 [2017], 55). We will contest both Zwicky’s and Pappas’s claims directly throughout this chapter.

⁸ Asmis, “Psychagogia,” 154.

⁹ Moss, “Soul-Leading, Again,” 19.

¹⁰ It is especially important not to overlook the full significance of love and its metaphysical orientation, for our most fundamental experience of love and yearning for Being precedes and drives our quest for knowledge of Being. As McCoy notes, “However paradoxical it may seem, the philosopher is characterized by a love of the forms that precedes his knowledge of them” (*Plato on Rhetoric*, 6; cf. 18-19). Likewise, White asks “Must we be inspired in order to philosophize? Must we love something in order to reason about it correctly, or even to fabulate it persuasively?” (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 224). White answers in the affirmative. The paradox is further complicated by the fact that, in a certain sense, our knowledge of the forms is also prior to our knowledge of them, as the recollection thesis implies. Likewise, as we shall see in Ch. 6, our speaking well is, to some extent, conditioned by our loving well. I take as programmatic White’s claim that the *Phaedrus* teaches that “if Socrates does indeed understand love and its metaphysical origins—the highest sense of love—then he knows all that a human being needs to know” (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 16). A further complication to the paradox, which cannot be explored here, is that in another sense, knowledge must be prior to love. The impasse concerning whether knowledge is prior to love (I can’t love x unless I know it) or whether love is prior to knowledge (I can’t know x until I love it) frequently animated the later Platonic tradition (as, for example, in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*), and the safest answer, admittedly beyond the scope of the argument here, is to say that both poles of the dilemma must be affirmed, but in different respects.

human nature will necessarily either be incomplete or have sublimated our erotic core within some other phenomenon (e.g., rhetorical language-use).

§1.3. Argument and Plan

12. In what follows, I first articulate the central theses of the interpretations of soul-leading developed by Asmis and Moss (§2). I give greater weight to Moss's argument, since it takes a more comprehensive (if still inadequate) and more philosophical view of soul-leading.¹¹ Because this chapter is devoted to the metaphysical orientation of love (rather than that of language), I only comment on Asmis's and Moss's claims about rhetoric insofar as they are relevant to love or to the general point being made in this chapter.

13. In §3.1, I argue that two significant claims that emerge from Moss's account are correct within a restrictive context, but nevertheless inadequate on account of Moss's restriction of love to "interpersonal love."¹² In a nutshell, these two claims are that 1. Love is extrinsic to the moral and intellectual formation of both the lover and the beloved, and 2. Interpersonal love can be understood without reference to the cosmic, divine, and ontological context within which it is situated. As a result, Moss takes love's capacity to act as a soul-leader to be remarkably contingent on factors like luck. I will address the first of these two claims throughout §3 by developing an interpretation of the *Palinode* wherein the both lover and

¹¹ By saying that Moss's account is "more philosophical" than Asmis's, I mean that Moss is more directly concerned with understanding the nature of the matter at hand, whereas much of Asmis's account is devoted to historical-critical issues.

¹² In "Love and the Individual in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1990), F. C. White notes the same problematic restriction in Nussbaum, who "writes as if love in the *Phaedrus* were concerned solely with humans, a thing altogether of this world." The argument of this chapter supports White's conclusion: "This surely is wrong: the human individual is not even the main object, goal or point of love, and Nussbaum has to contend with a heavy weight of contrary scholarly opinion on this point" (396, note 1). Zwicky, like Moss and Nussbaum, also seems to restrict love to interpersonal love ("Dialogue with the Dead," 31).

beloved undergo significant transformation precisely on account of each having his *erōs* awoken. In Chapter 5, I will consider how the dialogue's drama reinforces the claims I make in §3. The second of the two claims will be considered in Ch. 6.

14. In §4-5, I consider further features of the lovers' relationship which emerge from the Palinode's depiction of divinely-inspired, manic love. §4 discusses the roles that reciprocity and equality play in the lovers' relationship. I argue that reciprocity, though important, is insufficient to guarantee the lovers' equality (or, more accurately, equalization). Rather, the lovers can only become equalized by equally devoting themselves to a common object of love (i.e., Beauty) which transcends both and is reducible to neither. The necessity of "erotic convergence" for "erotic equality" in the Palinodic account opens up important insights about the nature and orientation of love. §5 considers at length the role that mediation plays in both the lovers' drama in particular and in Plato more generally. Soul-leading, I claim, is essentially a *mediating* activity. Rather than affecting the follower by means of her own activity, the soul-leader instead mediates the activity of something beyond herself, to which she is herself receptive.

15. §5 will set up Chapter 6's discussion of the second claim that emerges from Moss's account by pointing to the necessity of recognizing that interpersonal love can accomplish its effects only by way of mediating the activity of something prior to it. Interpersonal love, I will claim, only *is* what it is and does what it does on account of occurring within a love-context which precedes it and allows it to be in the first place. The call-and-response of lovers is always already situated within the prior call-and-response of reality with itself, in and through particular beings. Chapter 6 will end by considering how the *Phaedrus* likewise demands a

metaphysical orientation of language. We will briefly consider that demand by exploring the nature of writing.¹³

§2. Soul-Leading Primarily as a Practical Concern

§2.1. Asmis: Plato's Revaluation of Rhetoric as a Certain Soul-Leading

1. In Asmis's reading, the *Phaedrus* centers around Plato's "new" definition of rhetoric as "a certain guiding of souls" (*psuchagogia tis*, 261a). Plato illustrates his new understanding of rhetoric as soul-leading in the speeches on love in the dialogue's first half and then articulates its features in the dialectical discussion of rhetoric in the dialogue's second half. As the dialogue

¹³ One might object to the content of this chapter by raising two potential dangers that attend a claim that love is, in a sense, "more" about Being than about a particular beloved. There is no space to address either danger in great detail; however, I'll briefly articulate the dangers here and clarify the direction I would take in addressing them.

First, if love is basically ordered to Being within an essentially providential cosmos, do we thereby lose sight of the contingency of love which is part and parcel of our experience of interpersonal love? If so, Nussbaum would be right to censure Plato for his "anti-tragic" attitude; see *Fragility*, Part II (though Nussbaum claims that Plato has changed his mind about contingency and the value of the emotions by the time he wrote the *Phaedrus*; see, ch. 7). I would defend Plato from this charge by showing that Plato's metaphysical vision (which is largely opposed to that of the tragedians) motivates, rather than suppresses, a persistent concern for contingency and for the embodied and sub-rational aspects of human life. In Chapter 3, I discussed one way in which the Palinode recognizes and makes space for contingency; an account of the place of contingency in love would, I think, take a similar shape. Some of the background for such an argument will be developed in Ch. 6. Ferrari has aptly discussed the role of contingency in *Listening to the Cicadas* (see especially chs. 5-6), and I would, in general, follow his lead. Roochnik also defends Plato from Nussbaum's charge of being "anti-tragic;" see *Tragedy of Reason*, preface and "The Tragic Philosopher: A Critique of Martha Nussbaum," *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1998). By contrast to my line of defense, Roochnik concedes the critique of metaphysics to Plato's detractors and claims that Plato is himself a tragic philosopher rather than a practitioner of the metaphysical naiveté Roochnik takes to have been justly criticized by those detractors.

Second, if love is basically metaphysically ordered, is the individual beloved thereby reduced to being a mere ladder to be "kicked away" on one's journey to Beauty itself? If so, Gregory Vlastos would be right to censure Plato for his inadequate respect for the individual beloved. The principal locus of this criticism (frequently still accepted in recent times; cf. e.g., Hallvard Fossheim, "Non-individuality in the *Phaedrus*," *Symbolae Osloenses*. Vol. 84, No. 1 [2010]) is Vlastos's "The Individual as Object of Love" (*Platonic Studies* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981]), which has been justly criticized by a number of scholars (see especially Sheffield, "Beyond Eros: Friendship in the *Phaedrus*," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 111 [2011], F. C. White, "Love and the Individual," and, with greater emphasis on the *Symposium*, Schindler, "Plato and the Problem of Love," which I would follow in my own articulation of a response to the Vlastosian criticism). We will briefly give some reasons for why the Vlastosian criticism doesn't hold in §4 below.

progresses, Socrates leads Phaedrus (and the reader) away from dangerous forms of rhetorical soul-leading toward a wholesome form of rhetorical soul-leading concerned with truth. The three speeches illustrate three different rhetorical practices. Lysias's speech imitates the historical Lysias, who was a practitioner of the older, Gorgianic style of rhetoric, which Plato had attacked previously in the *Gorgias*. Socrates's anti-erotic speech represents the rhetoric of Plato's contemporary and rival, Isocrates, whom Plato is here implicitly attacking (as finally revealed in the dialogue's concluding reference to Isocrates at 278e).¹⁴ The Palinode represents the Platonic "true art of rhetoric" as a form of soul-leading ordered to self-knowledge, the truth, and the divine. The dialogue thus depicts a Socrates who both discusses the nature of rhetoric as soul-leading and practices the art in his interpersonal interactions.¹⁵

2. The novelty of Plato's definition of rhetoric as a form of soul-leading is two-fold. First, Asmis sees the *Phaedrus* as Plato's "revision" of his prior stance on rhetoric presented in the *Gorgias*, wherein rhetoric retains its customary restriction to the public sphere and wherein Socrates seems to deny that rhetoric could ever amount to an art (*technē*) structured by teachable principles. Instead, Gorgianic rhetoric is condemned as nothing more than a "knack" (*empeiria*), developed through experience. To signify his change of mind on rhetoric's

¹⁴ See Asmis, "Psychagogia," 160-161 for the Isocratean organization, content, and features of Socrates's anti-erotic speech, 164-165 for the anti-Isocratean features of the Palinode, and 167-172 for Plato's putative reformation of Isocratean rhetoric. Asmis (172) reads the ending of the dialogue, at which point Isocrates is mentioned for the first and only time (278e) as Plato's final censure Isocrates as dangerous on account of his deficient understanding of philosophy despite being better than Lysias (and Lysias's Gorgianic heritage). In her appendix to *Defense of Writing*, Burger contrasts Isocrates's purely practical, human, and political rhetorical practice with Plato's theoretically- and divinely-oriented practice. Likewise, Sweeney, "Pedagogical Settings," 88-93, McCoy, *Plato on Rhetoric*, 8-9, and, in more detail, "Alcidamas, Isocrates, and Plato on Speech, Writing, and Philosophical Rhetoric," *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 29 (2009); as McCoy argues, it is important to see the *Phaedrus* in conversation not just with Isocrates, but also with Alcidamas, who uses much of the imagery and terminology that Socrates uses, but with differing conceptions of philosophy and of spoken and written *logos*. See also Capra, *Plato's Four Muses: Plato's Phaedrus and the Poetics of Philosophy* (Center for Hellenic Studies, 2015), Chs. 1-2 for the relationship between the *Phaedrus* and the *Helens* of Isocrates, *Gorgias*, and Stesichorus.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

artfulness and audience, Plato has Phaedrus respond to Socrates's extension of rhetoric's scope to the private sphere with surprise: "In expressing surprise, Phaedrus stands for the general reader who is familiar with the discussion in the *Gorgias* and who is now being alerted that a new view is being proposed."¹⁶ On this interpretation, the *Gorgias* was conditioned by the supremacy of Gorgianic rhetoric at the time in which the *Gorgias* was written, whereas the *Phaedrus* responds to a shift in the rhetorical landscape of contemporary Athens—Isocrates has displaced Gorgias as the most formidable rhetorician and is in direct pedagogical competition with Plato.¹⁷

3. We find the second aspect of the novelty of Plato's definition of rhetoric in terms of soul-leading in Plato's use of the rare, generally negatively-valued word *psychagogia*.¹⁸ As Asmis perceptively argues, Plato intentionally plays on the word's unsavory connotations before rehabilitating it for his own purposes. Because the word originally signifies such fraught practices as necromancy, the evocation and conjuring of souls from the dead, and beguiling or bewitching the souls of the living, it is a fitting description for the kind of sophistic rhetoric plaguing Socratic Athens.¹⁹ Hence, by using this specific term, Socrates initially invites "the

¹⁶ Ibid., 155. In articulating her thesis in this way, Asmis relies on the problematic developmentalist hermeneutic (discussed in Ch. 1) wherein the "later" *Phaedrus* corrects the "earlier" consideration of rhetoric found in the *Gorgias*. One need neither take the two discussions of rhetoric as opposed nor take the "later" account as a reconsideration of the "former," even if the two dialogues could be placed within a compositional chronology. For example, one could understand the differences between the two discussions as conditioned by the situation and character of Socrates's interlocutors rather than as an indication of a shift in the *mens auctoris*; cf. McCoy, *Plato on Rhetoric*, 189. Further, the apparently opposed claims from the two dialogues may not, in fact, be irreconcilable; cf. *ibid.*, 174: the *Phaedrus* incorporates the "knack" (*empeiria*) aspect of Gorgianic rhetoric within its description of the rhetorical art's reliance on learning, through practice, how to take advantage of the "opportune moment" (*kairos*). See also Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 10ff.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 167: "The threat perceived by Plato is no longer Gorgianic demagoguery, but Isocratean 'philosophy.'"

¹⁸ See Chapter 1 for my general characterization of Plato's use of "leading language" in the *Phaedrus*.

¹⁹ See Asmis, "Psychagogia," 155-156. Asmis notes that Gorgias understood his own rhetorical practice as a kind of "drugging" and bewitching (*Praise of Helen* 8-14); one could also note in parallel that Socrates claims that he only delivered his anti-erotic speech on account of having been drugged by Phaedrus

reader to understand the term in a pejorative sense;”²⁰ contextualized by the whole dialogue, however, the word’s meaning transforms from “*psychagogia* as beguilement to *psychagogia* as guidance of the soul.”²¹ Both in his practice and in his argumentation, Socrates replaces an Isocratean (and *a fortiori*, a Gorgianic) notion of rhetoric as persuasion based on plausibility with an artful rhetoric based on the knowledge of truth (cf. 262a-c, 270b-272b), aimed at pleasing the gods rather than human beings (273e).²² Thus, the function and trajectory of this new rhetoric mirrors that of interpersonal love as described in the *Palinode*, by which we can “recover a divine condition of knowledge.”²³ Hence, in *psychagogia*, a soul-leading ultimately directed to the divine, “genuine rhetoric and genuine love will appear as one.”²⁴

4. While Asmis offers much to chew on, more must be said if we are to understand Plato’s conception of love (and thereby of soul-leading, the genus under which love falls). Asmis plausibly situates Plato as responding to his lived context (the debate with Isocrates),

(*katapharmakeuthentos*, 242e), for Phaedrus has discovered a drug (*pharmakon*, i.e., Lysias’s speech) by which he could lead Socrates out of the city (230d; cf. *agousin* and *perixein* at 230d-e). Asmis also notes that Aristophanes depicts Socrates in the *Birds* as conjuring souls by a lake (line 1555); she later claims (157; cf. 168) that Plato is painting a counter-portrait, in which Socrates is “a ‘psychagogue’ who guides the soul to the truth by seeking it himself.” One could also point to the opening scene of the *Protagoras* (see 314e-316a), which offers a lurid depiction of sophistic rhetoric as a kind of beguilement and evocation of the dead.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 157. “Only shameful rhetoric beguiles others; real rhetoric guides souls to self-knowledge through a knowledge of soul.” Pieper notes that, in the interlude between his two speeches, Socrates “beguiles” Phaedrus into the truth by making “Phaedrus’ admiration for formal eloquence rush headlong into the *religious* truth about Love” (*Enthusiasm*, 39). We’ll return to the dialogical transformation of ambiguous terms in §3.2.

²² *Ibid.*, 165. Recall Socrates’s earlier remark to this effect: “As you know, my friend, the soul also is prophetic in a way, for she was causing me some trouble even before as I was delivering my [anti-erotic] speech and I felt shame somehow, lest in the words of the poet Ibycus, ‘bringing harm upon the gods, I win honor among men’” (242c-d).

²³ *Ibid.*, 164. Asmis goes on: “In [the *Palinode*’s] praise of love, which turns out to be a praise of the love of wisdom, philosophy, Socrates not only practices genuine rhetorical *psychagogia*, but also makes *psychagogia* the subject of his discourse. He shows that the lover guides the soul of another toward its former divine condition and thereby guides and finds himself. The genuine rhetorician, we will learn later, has the same aim as the lover [...].”

²⁴ *Ibid.*

but her focus lingers on biographical-historical considerations, and her conceptual work discusses rhetoric almost exclusively. She speaks little about the nature and psychagogic function of love beyond the claims articulated in the prior paragraph. But how are we to understand the mythico-metaphysical language in which the *Palinode* presents love's orientation toward truth? Without some resolution to this question, the significance of the shared function and trajectory of love and rhetoric will remain opaque. Moss helps us begin to consider the implications of soul-leading for love by clarifying what love and rhetoric jointly seek to accomplish. The dialogue does not just propose love and rhetoric as two types of soul-leading with a common goal; it also, according to Moss, examines how well either of these practices succeed in converting "the soul toward truth and the good life."²⁵ Importantly for our purposes here, Moss also argues that the dialogue's foregrounding of love is neither "a red herring" nor a merely convenient topic for rhetorical display, but is instead philosophically important in its own right, even if, at the end of the day, Plato comes to see the art of rhetoric as the more capable means of converting souls to the truth.²⁶

§2.2. Moss: Plato's More Secure Method of Soul-Leading: Rhetoric vs. Interpersonal Love

5. Moss argues that the *Phaedrus* is "a treatise on the serious kind of persuasion that Plato calls soul-leading,"²⁷ the kind of persuasion involved in "converting" people to

²⁵ Moss, "Soul-Leading, Again," 3. In specifying the subject-matter of the *Phaedrus* in this way (discussed further in §2.2), Moss interprets the end of interpersonal love in terms of the end of rhetoric (i.e., persuasion). Hence, even though Moss gives much greater weight than Asmis does to love, her work is still characterized by the lopsidedness discussed in §1.2 above. By contrast, McCoy rightly states that love and rhetoric are to be seen in terms of the movement of the soul toward the forms (cf. "Love and Soul-Leading"), not merely to persuasion. Naturally, we would have to reconsider Moss's claims about the comparative efficacy of the different types of soul-leading if we re-specify the end of soul-leading as communion and not just persuasion.

²⁶ See. *ibid.*, 13-14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

philosophy. The *Phaedrus* prompts us to analyze and evaluate the efficacy of interpersonal love and rhetoric as two means by which the soul can be led into conversion. As Moss notes, soul-leading is lexically and semantically connected to other terms that Plato frequently uses in discussions and dramatizations of philosophical conversion.²⁸ Throughout the corpus, Plato consistently emphasizes the difficulty of conversion, on account of which he is always hunting for a more effective means.²⁹ The *Phaedrus* presents the true art of rhetoric as a new means of philosophical conversion, more practical than the *Republic*'s "musical education" and more secure than the *Symposium*'s interpersonal love.³⁰ Plato requires this new means of philosophical conversion because the multi-decades-long educational program of the *Republic* is "laborious" and because interpersonal love, as described both in Diotima's speech and in the *Palinode*, is subject to two severe limitations.

6. According to Moss, interpersonal love's capacity to effect philosophical conversion is hampered on account of (1) the necessity that each party be intellectually and morally well-formed and (2) the unlikeliness that two such figures will meet and fall in love. Though interpersonal love is a "wonderfully effective tool" and "a method sweeter than the laborious

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 4-6; *Apology*, 29d, *Republic* 517a, 518c-d, *Symposium* 210a, 210e-211e, etc. Asmis, "Psychagogia," 158, also notes the dramatization of soul-leading in the prologue's use of leading-language, as does Gordon at greater length in *Plato's Erotic World*, 166-174.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 5 on the difficulty of the conversion; likewise, *Republic* 496d-e, 517a, *Symposium* 204a, the exchange with Callicles in the *Gorgias*, Socrates's sentencing in the *Apology*, etc. The dialogues' consistency on this point has led some commentators, like Roochnik, to question whether a rationally-motivated conversion is even possible. See *Tragedy of Reason*, especially chapter 3. Though an adequate response to Roochnik's argument lies outside the scope of the current project, the account I give of the work done on the human soul by Being itself, which conditions any human activity, would provide the principles according to which an adequate response to Roochnik could be formulated, for, if my interpretation is successful, Being itself is not indifferent to our knowledge of it, but, instead, actively "calls" us to recognize it and commune with it. See Chapter 6.

³⁰ The success of Moss's interpretation hinges somewhat on the question of whether or not Phaedrus is converted by the end of the dialogue, for, if he is not, as some commentators claim (about which, see §3 of the next chapter), it would seem that the dialogue showcases the *failure* of psychagogic rhetoric, which would seem to indicate that psychagogic rhetoric does not avoid the limitations of psychagogic love, as Moss claims.

education described in the *Republic*,” interpersonal love still requires the intellectual and moral formation that the *Republic*’s “musical education” is supposed to instill if it is going to lead a soul successfully into philosophical conversion.³¹ Diotima’s “ladder of love” provides such formation through a slow and stepwise process, which requires “the supervision of a qualified leader.”³² Though the *Phaedrus* depicts a much swifter erotic ascent, the dialogue intimates that this swiftness is *only* available for *already well-disposed souls*. Intellectually: the soul must have seen the forms “recently” and must be able to recall them easily; morally: without moderation, the motive powers of one’s soul will drive the soul discordantly in antipodal directions, hindering the possibility of ascent. And so, Moss argues, even in the *Phaedrus*, “love can *only* lead to philosophy someone whose soul is *already* suited to it.”³³ On account of the necessity of intellectual and moral formation, the success of interpersonal love is “highly contingent”: love “is a soul-leader available only to those lucky enough to fall in love with, or to be loved by, a philosophical type.”³⁴ Interpersonal love will fail to lead any soul which either (1) isn’t philosophical by nature or (2) is philosophical by nature but unlucky in her search for a suitable partner.

7. Because of his recognition of the limitations of interpersonal love, Moss’s Plato seeks to develop a new method—indeed, a *technē*—of soul-leading which is “more widely

³¹ Moss, “Soul-Leading, Again,” 6, 13.

³² *Ibid.*, 6. Cf. 12. Diotima begins her initiation of Socrates into the “higher mysteries” by saying that the lover’s guide must guide him correctly (*ean orthōs hēgētai ho hēgoumenos*; *Symposium* 210a).

³³ *Ibid.*, 13; emphasis added. Cf. Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 16. Moss claims that Phaedrus is “not by nature a philosophical soul” and so, by implication, couldn’t be converted by interpersonal love. Nevertheless, because he loves beautiful speeches, he “has a chance” (“Soul-Leading, Again” 15).

³⁴ *Ibid.* One could add that Lysias foreshadows this criticism by noting that “if you were to choose the best from the pool of lovers, your pickings would be slim; but if you were to select the one who best suits you from the general pool, your range of choice would be greater. So actually there is far greater hope of finding someone from this group who is worthy of your friendship” (231d-e).

applicable,” “not contingent,” and more “egalitarian.”³⁵ According to Moss, Plato finds that new method in a “heavily revised version of Lysias’ trade: rhetoric.”³⁶ By developing a revised art of rhetoric, Plato isn’t abandoning interpersonal love, but instead provides a way of refocusing our eroticism and desire for beautiful bodies onto beautiful *logoi* (speeches), specially designed to lead the auditor to a love of wisdom.³⁷ Since the rhetorical expert and her auditor need not *fall in love*, both parties will be less beset by the contingency of interpersonal

³⁵ Ibid., 14, 19. Moss specifies rhetoric as a “systematic art” (*technē*) and correctly notes that a true *technē*, for Plato, is always ordered to benefiting its object by bringing it into a good condition (as defined by the norms internal to the thing’s nature). See Schindler, “Work as Contemplation: On the Platonic Notion of *Technē*,” for an exposition of this claim and the implications thereof. By contrast, some scholars tend to conflate Platonic *technē*—a body of knowledge with intelligible and teachable principles ordered to the flourishing and well-being of its particular object—with a Cartesian-flavored “technique”—a generalizable means divorced from any tethering to specific ends, which serves the technician’s interests rather than the object’s well-being. Because the object doesn’t impose any norms on the technique, the technique can be taken as a “value-free” instrument of control over its object. See e.g., Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 94ff.; Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 160; Rochnik, *Tragedy of Reason*, 18-21. Schindler notes that “Rochnik’s characterization of the question [...] presupposes that a *technē* is a ‘mastery over,’ in the sense that would subjugate the object of *technē* to the will and intentions of the practitioner (“Language as *Technē* vs. Language as Technology: Plato’s Critique of Sophistry,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 34 [2019]).

³⁶ Ibid., 14. Whereas Nussbaum sees the *Phaedrus* as departing from the “earlier” dialogues’ attempt to find a *technē* for the moral life by which we could escape the messiness and contingency of embodied human experience (see *Fragility*, 5, 8, 89-90, 136, 138, 201, and esp. 206), Moss sees the *Phaedrus* as discerning a new *technē* for the moral life which doesn’t fall prey to contingency and specificity, the very thing to which Nussbaum takes Plato to be newly opened (*Fragility* 202, 214-222). Nussbaum’s account remains influential; see, e.g., Whiting’s 2013 article “Love: Self-Propagation, Self-Preservation, or *Ekastasis*?” 404. Similarly, see Nicholson *Philosophy of Love*, 122, 196-197. Fussi gives a number of good reasons for why we shouldn’t accept Nussbaum’s claim’s about the *Phaedrus* being Plato’s recantation of the accounts given in the *Republic*; cf. “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 63; Capra concurs (*Plato’s Four Muses*, 53-54). Likewise, Belfiore suggests that the account of interpersonal love in the *Phaedrus* is “more detailed, but not necessarily incompatible with the views expressed by his Diotima in the *Symposium*” (*Plato’s Daimonic Art*, 202). As we saw in a note above, one may account for the putative differences between the two accounts by reference to differences in setting (the solitary grove outside the city versus the party full of elites), character, and the nature of the discussion (a friendly conversation versus the agonistic setting of a speech-competition); see *ibid.*, 202-203.

³⁷ Ibid., 6. By contrast to Moss, who takes the *Phaedrus* to show how we can systematically refocus our eroticism from the beautiful body to the beautiful speech, and thereby be led to wisdom, McCoy argues that Socrates’s love-speeches are designed to lead Phaedrus away from the love of speeches to a love of the forms; see *Plato on Rhetoric*, 178-180. McCoy’s account is preferable in its recognition of the metaphysical orientation of love. Socrates’s prayer to Eros (cf. 257b) does indeed express a desire that Phaedrus be converted to philosophy by means of wisdom-loving speeches, but, importantly, Socrates prays that Phaedrus will “devote his life solely to Love with wisdom-loving speeches.” Phaedrus needs to learn to love well, so that he may, like Socrates, be a disciple of Love, and thereby follow Love wherever it leads.

love. Further, the rhetorical art does not require the auditor to have a naturally philosophical or well-formed soul. By virtue of possessing the rhetorical art, the rhetorician will have knowledge of soul-types and of how different kinds of *logoi* affect different souls. Accordingly, the soul-leading rhetorician will be able both to tailor her speech to her audience's needs and to exploit any passions for beautiful *logoi* the auditor might have, regardless of how "unruly" the auditor's soul may be.³⁸ "These aspects of the art of rhetoric," Moss avers, "endow it with a very important potential: it can act as a soul-leader as effective as interpersonal love, but without love's limitations."³⁹ Love and artful rhetoric can both convert the soul toward a life lived in pursuit of the forms, the Good, and "really real reality" (247c), but rhetoric is the more certain guide.

8. As we've seen, Moss argues that love and the true art of rhetoric are two types of soul-leading, the objective of which is to convert the soul to what is true and good. Moss focuses on evaluating Plato's new understanding of rhetoric in terms of how well it compares to love as a *means* toward philosophical conversion. Though Moss has correctly specified the end of soul-leading, her focus on the practical question of which means more securely accomplishes the goal leads her to neglect the metaphysical context of love, as disclosed in the *Palinode*, with the result that her practical evaluation misses the mark on some important points. Accordingly, I will argue that Moss's conclusions need to be reevaluated. The set of

³⁸ See *ibid.*, 19-22 and Asmis, "Psychagogia," 164, 168-170. Both Moss and Asmis point to the greater efficacy of rhetoric as a soul-leader than love on account of rhetoric's ability to adapt its speeches to the *status animae* of its hearer by reference to Socrates's rhetorical capacity to turn "dappled" or "variegated" (*poikilos*) speeches to match Phaedrus's "dappled" soul. Cf. Socrates's discussion of the "hundred-headed Typhon" (230a), and the uses of *poikilos* at 236b, 277c, and *Republic* 588c. Phaedrus is described at 257b as "going in two directions." For a detailed treatment of Plato's notion of *poikilia* in relation to beauty and to the dangers of pleasure, see Jonathan Fine, "Plato on the Dangerous Pleasures of Poikilia," *The Classical Quarterly*. Vol. 71, No. 1 (2021).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

claims that will occupy us for the remainder of this chapter revolve around one basic thesis: neither Asmis nor Moss go deeper than a *merely* practical consideration of the *means* by which we might be brought to what is good for the soul, and so we must get down, so to speak, to the metaphysical “brass tacks” if we want to understand Plato’s account of soul-leading. By restricting love to interpersonal love, and by considering interpersonal love as one possible means among others of the ascent, we don’t actually clarify what love *is* and what love loves. As Socrates continually reminds us, we must first consider what something is before we can adequately determine its qualities (cf. *Meno* 71b). The determination of what love *is* is prior to any determination of its effectiveness. What, then, is love, and whither does it lead?⁴⁰

§3. Love’s Contribution to the Formations of the Lovers’ Souls

§3.1. Attunement and Reevaluation

1. Over the course of this chapter and Chapter 6, we will focus on two claims about love which emerge from Moss’s account.⁴¹ By refocusing our attention so that the metaphysical orientation is given primacy to the practical orientation, we will see that these two claims transform: they are accurate within a restrictive context, but problematic when viewed from within a more expansive—and thereby more adequate—context. The two claims

⁴⁰ As we noted above, the dialogue twice highlights the necessity of clarifying what love *is* before making any claims about love’s effects, and so the Socrates of the *Phaedrus* seems to be consistent with that of the *Meno* with respect to the order of inquiry. Likewise, Socrates’s acknowledges moving from definition and description to examining effects at 238d-e in his anti-erotic speech. The Palinode gives parallel cases: Socrates gives definition and description at 245c-246b and 253c-254b and follows up in both cases with accounts of the actions and passions of the soul (cf. 245c: *pathē te kai erga*). As we shall see, we must not only discern what x is before determining x’s effects and qualities, but also we must discern what x is in relation to “the whole” (cf. 270b-c).

⁴¹ I use the term “claim” here somewhat loosely to include not only what Moss has directly said, but also what is implied by what she has said and what can plausibly be inferred from her silence. My situation of these claims within Moss’s argument is more heuristic and occasional than essential, for versions of them can be and are upheld outside of the context of her argument, as we’ll discuss in passing. By responding to the claims here articulated, I am by no means limiting my response to Moss’s argument.

we seek to reevaluate are as follows: 1. The success of interpersonal love’s psychagogic capacity *presupposes* that both parties in the relationship already possess suitable characters. By implication, the Palinode does not present love as being involved in or relevant to our moral and intellectual formations.⁴² 2. The intelligibility and efficacy of interpersonal love can be judged without reference to any greater cosmic, theological, or ontological context within which interpersonal love operates. We will argue against the first claim throughout the rest of this chapter before taking up the second more directly in Chapter 6. By extension, a third claim—the failure or success of love is largely conditioned by one’s luck in being born with a suitable nature and in finding a partner with a suitable nature—would have to be revised (especially in light of the arguments made in the previous chapter about the inessentiality of any distinctions within the human soul-type). To repurpose a remark from Heidegger, we ask ‘did Moss miss the essence of love precisely because her account lacked love,’ which, when followed where it leads, leads us to reality itself?’⁴³ Our task, then, is to situate love within the ontological context provided by the *Phaedrus* so that we can better evaluate these claims. It is

⁴² By contrast, consider Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 88-89: when Socrates speaks of erotic madness, he is speaking “eschatologically,” of salvation, “and salvation is achieved only, though always, where true love exists.” Whatever weakness there is in the human heart on account of the wily horse’s pleasure-lust “can be outweighed, if not entirely reshaped and transformed, by the elevating power of true love. [...] What Plato means is that love, insofar as it is real *ekstasis*, a stepping out of the narrow circle of the self-concerned ego, a frenzy, *mania*, is capable of carrying aloft with it even the heaviest burden, for it remembers the holy things it once contemplated.” Cf. likewise Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 128-129: “Love of goodness, then, is precisely what brings about, or in fact *is*, this movement. Love thus proves to be an indispensable aspect of coming to true knowledge.”

⁴³ Cf. Gonzalez, “I Have to Live in Eros,” 222. The original quotation, given to account for why the Palinode is superior to Socrates’s anti-erotic speech despite the fact that both speeches meet the formal requirements for good speech-making, reads: “Did perhaps the first speech miss the essence of *erōs* precisely because *erōs* was missing to it?” Since, for Heidegger, *erōs* involves a striving for origins, Socrates’s first speech missed the essence of *erōs* because it took *erōs* as a mere *factum*, something given, which calls for nothing beyond psychological analysis. The Palinode, by contrast, is erotic insofar as it seeks out the origins of *erōs* (cf. 222-223). On this point, see also Nicholson, *Philosophy of Love*, 157. Like Socrates’s anti-erotic speech, Moss’s discussion of love rests content in taking love as something merely given in our experience (i.e., merely as interpersonal love); accordingly, she does not ask sufficiently about love’s ultimate whence and whither (cf. 227a). By contrast, an exemplary account of love in terms of its ultimate whence and whither is given by Gordon in *Plato’s Erotic World* (see especially chs. 1 and 6).

only by seeing how love is always already situated within a greater love-context that we can come to appreciate what love actually is: the striving for Being (*Seinserstrebnis*), in Heidegger's provocative phrase.⁴⁴ Only then can we adequately evaluate its effects and implications. Here we'll discuss love's effect on the lovers; later, we'll consider how love can have this effect in the first place.

2. As Moss correctly observes, formation—both intellectual and moral—is ultimately necessary for interpersonal love to act successfully as a soul-leader. However, Moss seems to take the formation of both lover and beloved as *extrinsic* to the experience and drama of love, for in the *Symposium*, the lover's love does not lead to ascent successfully unless the lover should be guided by a suitable guide (*ean orthōs hēgētai ho hēgoumenos*; 210a) through the stages of an educational curriculum, and in the *Phaedrus*, the ascent will happen only for “those who already possess the right sort of soul.”⁴⁵ I argue, by contrast, that formation is part of the drama and effects of the relationship of interpersonal love.⁴⁶ As we shall see, interpersonal love can contribute to formation on account of the greater Love-context in which every interpersonal love relationship is always already situated, wherein there are forces at work in

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 229. See also 222-223, where Gonzalez explains Heidegger's discussion of how Socrates transports Phaedrus from an ontic account of love to an ontological account, with the result that Phaedrus is now in a position to see, for the first time, the essence of love: the soul's “striving for the originary unity, that striving for being.” While I agree with Heidegger's basic characterization of Platonic love's metaphysical orientation, my own reading is not restricted to the ontological aspects of love, as I discuss below: the striving for Being is both mediated by (as in the “Ladder of Love”) and culminates in (as in the “return to the cave”) the striving for beings. See also Nicholson, *Philosophy of Love*, 10: Plato's intention “is not an effort to condemn a love or a sexuality that fails to become sublimated into philosophy. Rather, it is a claim in the opposite direction: he wants to declare a philosophy inadequate that has not taken its start from the deep recesses of our *erōs*, our desire, and our memory. [... If philosophy] is an exercise of mere intellect and contrivance, not touched by the divine madness, it will be of no use. Philosophy without *erōs* cannot disclose true being.”

⁴⁵ Moss, “Soul-Leading, Again,” 13. Cf. 6, 12.

⁴⁶ As Nicholson writes, “it is love that seizes the soul in the first place, and the influence of love, step by step, draws the soul on high” (*Philosophy of Love*, 198).

addition to the individual lovers (Chapter 6).⁴⁷ If interpersonal love contributes to the lovers' formations irrespective of any prior educational program, then interpersonal love's psychagogic capacity may be less prone to the limitations Moss identified (see §2.2). In a word, love can, at least in principle, *make us* into the kinds of beings that love can lead to truth; love doesn't need to presuppose that we are already ready to be led.

3. Does the experience and drama of love contribute to the moral or intellectual formation of either the lover or the beloved? The *Phaedrus*'s answer seems to be both yes and no, on account of the ambivalence of "love" as a term applying to both human sickness and divine gift. We've already discussed (see Chapter 2 above) how the anti-erotic speeches disclose a conception of love which is deleterious to both lover and beloved. Humanly-sick love, we could say, is "counter-formative" for both lovers and beloveds. More than anything else, humanly-sick love needs guidance, particularly a "leading-around" (*periagōgē*) of the soul from its inclination toward what we previously called "reality-resistant goods"—goods which tend to refuse to be measured by definite limits of satiation—to that to which human desire is properly suited.⁴⁸ Such a sickness comes *not* from loving "the wrong goods" (for, given that the good is whatever is truly suitable to desire, there can be no "wrong good," since a "wrong good" would amount to being a desirable thing not suited to desire), but from loving genuine goods *wrongly*, in an unmeasured way (as we discussed in Chapter 3). The healing of humanly-

⁴⁷ Cf. Muir, "Friendship in Education," 240: "Plato argues through the myth that the movement of two souls toward each other, and then together toward knowledge of the good, constitutes not only a binding friendship but also the process of mutual education of the two friends." Likewise, F. Ferrari discusses the reciprocity of the educational aspects of the relationship; see *Listening to the Cicadas*, 167-184. We'll discuss erotic reciprocity in §4.

⁴⁸ Nicholson rightfully notes that "It would be a misunderstanding to suppose that the good kind of love and the bad kind are two neutral species or divisions of love, indifferent to one another. The truth is that the bad kind of love is a *corruption* of the good kind, a disorder of love, love falsely directed" (*Philosophy of Love*, 123); likewise, Whiting, "Love," 421.

sick love comes about in a redirection of love's inclinations away from an unmeasured pursuit of finite goods toward the measured pursuit of finite goods made possible by the recognition of—and love of—*The Good*. But, as we shall see, the experience of love *can itself accomplish the "leading-around"* of humanly-sick love toward something more divine.

4. By contrast to the *Phaedrus*'s anti-erotic speeches, the Palinode presents an account of love wherein the experience of love contributes to the formation and well-being of both lover and beloved. Unlike the humanly-sick lover, the divinely-mad lover is *not* (ultimately) controlled by his desire for pleasure (239c, 240d, 241c-d); rather, the divinely-mad lover is one in whom reason takes the rein (*hēniobēsis*; 246b; cf. 256b).⁴⁹ Consequently, the divinely-mad lover is not jealous or envious (239a, 253b-c), does not "keep scorecards" (231a-b, 256e-257a), does not conspire to keep the beloved weak and dependent (238e-240a, 252d-253c), is not fickle (231c-d, 240e-241b, 255b, 256a-e), and is not consumptive like a wolf unto the lamb (241c-d), for both lover and beloved find their nourishment elsewhere (247d-e).⁵⁰ Accordingly, the beloved is not hindered from growth, but instead actively encouraged to flourish; indeed, the lover's experience of love leads him to promote the beloved's flourishing. As a result of love's effects on the pair, the two are able to form the basis of a lifelong friendship in proportion to the excellence of their love (256a-e).⁵¹

⁴⁹ See Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 230: The Palinode revises the account of love in Socrates's anti-erotic speech by showing that "love does not come as an irrational force from outside but is instead deliberately and rationally sought." See also Sheffield, "Beyond Eros," 269-270.

⁵⁰ On this, see Fussi, "As the Wolf Loves the Lamb," especially, 69-70: "[...] generosity and envy are the categories that distinguish love marked by divine madness—winged love—from the love described by the previous two speeches." The "non-envy" of the divinely-mad lover is especially important in light of the Palinode's specification of "non-envy" as a key feature of divinity. Luc Brisson notes the strong emphasis on the lover's jealous envy (*phthonos*) in Socrates's first speech; see "The Notion of *Phthonos* in Plato," 206-207.

⁵¹ See also Sheffield, "Beyond Eros," 261-262 for a definition of and necessary features of "philosophical friendship." Much of Sheffield's analysis must be affirmed, though she is, I think, wrong to try to separate *erōs* and *philia* as being differentiated by their proper objects: "The *eros* of both [lover and beloved] is for

5. We can see love's transformative effect particularly well in the account of how the Zeus-following lover learns to restrain his desire for pleasure, wherein the lover's desire for the beloved is transformed by care into service, and whereby the beloved begins to experience return-love (*anterōs*, 255d-e). Given that the Palinode declares that lovers choose beloveds according to the god which they jointly follow (252d-e), we can infer that, for any given interpersonal relationship, both parties share the same basic "soul-type."⁵² Accordingly, evidence of love's formative effect for one member should be sufficient to indicate that the other member also could be so formed. Socrates describes such a reciprocity in formation explicitly in the case of the Zeus-following pair. Further, if we can articulate a good reason to think of the distinctions in soul-types given in the Palinode as distinctions in degree rather than as distinctions in kind (as we sought to show in the previous chapter), and if we find evidence that the Zeus-following lover is formed by his experience of love, then we have

the Form of beauty, and their *philia* is for each other" (257, note 11). Though *erōs* and *philia* do have relatively distinct (though, as Sheffield notes, profoundly connected) senses, the lovers are properly specified as *lovers and beloveds* (*erontes, eromenoi*) with respect to each other (additionally, we might note that *erōs* is considered to be a species of *philia* in the *Laws*; see 837a). As I will claim in §4 below, *erōs* is characterized as having a "double-intentionality;" it is *of* both the beloved individual and that Beauty which is present as a whole but irreducible to the beautiful beloved. On Beauty's transcendence and immanence, see Schindler, "Disclosing Beauty," 38: "Even if beauty is present as a whole, it is not *wholly present: totus sed non totaliter.*"

⁵² While this inference is dialectically necessary for the argument here, it does not seem to be necessary simply, for if we accept the arguments of the prior chapter (1) concerning the non-absoluteness of the distinctions between the soul's typologies given in the Palinode and (2) that the mythic depiction of the soul's various lives can be read, at least in part, as a "realized" or "immanent" eschatology, the implication would be that though we are all thrown into a certain soul-type, we are not bound to remain within the confines of that soul-type, even in this life. Accordingly—though admittedly, the argument is getting a bit far from the surface level of the text—it seems possible, on this account, that a philosophically-oriented soul could help a non-philosophically-oriented soul become philosophically-oriented through a friendship based on care and desire for truth and goodness (if this were not true, it would seem like the vast majority of philosophy teaching would be a fruitless endeavor!). In that case, we might say that the apparently non-philosophically-oriented soul always already was philosophically-oriented, though she couldn't recognize this fact except "retrospectively" (I borrow the language from a parallel argument made by C. S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*). The distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical soul would be about one's thrownness or given state, not about one's unalterable nature, for, it would seem, there is no such thing as a non-philosophical *nature* (even if we most frequently find people in a non-philosophical *disposition*). If so, we have another reason to think that Moss's "severe limitations of love" are not so severe.

evidence that not only the Zeus-following beloved can be so formed, but that all human souls can be so transformed in principle.⁵³

§3.2. The Lover's Transformation: Genuine Service

6. In what follows, I focus on the Zeus-following lover because that lover provides the ideal against which other lovers are to be measured and because Socrates tends to restrict his discussion to the Zeus-following lover, only occasionally diverting attention to lovers who follow other gods.⁵⁴ With respect to the question of whether the experience of love contributes to the Zeus-following lover's formation, our main consideration must be the following remark given near the end of Socrates's speech: "Because the boy is now waited on in every possible way as if he were a god, and the lover is *no longer pretending* but *truly feels* his servitude, the boy is naturally friendly [...]" (255a; emphasis added). Here, Socrates notes a fundamental moral shift in the lover which was caused by the experience of beauty, that which love loves.⁵⁵

⁵³ Thus the argument of Ch. 3 is necessary for the argument of this chapter which hinges on the applicability of the experiences and drama of the Zeus-following pair to other souls, an applicability which is denied by some commentators (cf. Hyland, *Quesiton of Beauty*, 85-86), especially insofar as some commentators take Zeus-following souls to be an unrealizable ideal.

⁵⁴ As we argued in the last chapter (see especially §6), all human souls are Zeus-followers, albeit in differing degrees of mediation; likewise, as we suggested in the last chapter, the Palinode's more detailed descriptions of the activities of lover and beloved are actually given independently of the lovers' choice of god to follow (though the context does strongly imply that the lovers being described are Zeus-followers). If the argument of the last chapter is successful, whether or not the lovers described by Socrates are Zeus-followers isn't particularly relevant to this chapter, for the description will hold for the whole human type (even if, perhaps, the details will vary among the particular human sub-types), and because one's choice of god to follow in the cosmic ascent is more a matter of taste than something which has a definitive bearing on one's eschatological prospects.

⁵⁵ Though the lover's transformation is more clearly moral than intellectual, given that it tracks a change in the lover's motivations for his actions (as 255a implies) and given that the lover picks up the god's "habits and practices to the extent that humans can share in the divine" (253a), there is certainly an intellectual component to the shift, for the lover must learn how to practice this kind of service (252e). Doing so requires coming to greater knowledge, through memory (253a), about both oneself and the god one followed.

7. Though we are taking the remark just quoted from 255a as the interpretive key for understanding the lover's transformation (as well as, ultimately, the beloved's as we will discuss in the next subsection), there is a second moment of this section of the *Palinode* which needs to be highlighted: 252e-253a, the exact center of the dialogue.⁵⁶ Accordingly, we will first discuss the lover's preliminary experience of being roused by the beauty of the beloved (roughly 250e-252e) before interpreting what takes place at the dialogue's midpoint, which ultimately accounts for the transformation described at 255a.

8. When the lover first beholds the beauty of the beloved, he experiences terror (251a); as the "in-flowing and invading draughts of beauty" (251c) enter into the lover, terror transforms into reverence, "as if he were before a god" (251a). The lover's experience of beauty nourishes his soul, restoring the "natural power of the wing" (251b). It "causes both a relief from pain and a feeling of joy" (251d). When separated from the beauty of the beloved, the soul is "driven mad with anguish" (251d), and the intermixed experience of joy and anguish leads the soul into perplexity (251e). The lover's soul is "not willing at all to be deprived of this pleasure" and begins to neglect all other sources of values (mothers, brothers, companions, property, refinements; 252a). The lover is "ready now to be a slave" and sees the beloved as "the only doctor for her greatest labors and pains" (252a-b). He is willing to worship the beloved as if he were a god (252e). It is no wonder that onlookers would judge the lover to be mad, for "those who hear not the music think the dancers mad."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ According to J. B. Kennedy, "Plato's Forms, Pythagorean Mathematics, and Stichometry," 11. Kennedy notes that a number of dialogues highlight the themes of justice, the ideal philosopher, and the philosopher's relation to the divine at the exact center.

⁵⁷ A proverb of unknown provenance, often (probably mistakenly) attributed to Nietzsche.

9. Clearly, the lover is driven by an intense desire for the beloved; if, however, we look back on this passage from the perspective of Socrates's later remark (255a) quoted above, the implication seems to be that the lover's worship is in some way *inauthentic*, at least initially. If we stopped here, we might think that the lover does indeed love the beloved extractively, like the wolf unto the lamb (241c-d). As we just saw, the lover is "not willing at all to be deprived of this pleasure" (252a); likewise, we recall from Socrates's anti-erotic speech that the *humanly-mad* lover is "compelled to pursue pleasure rather than goodness" (239c). The similarity in the humanly-mad and divinely-mad lovers' portraits seems to belie our claim in §3.1 that the divinely-mad lover is ultimately *not* enslaved to pleasure-lust.⁵⁸

10. The beloved is a source of joy and an anodyne for the lover's pain, to be sure, but the lover is also ready to do all sorts of outlandish things—is ready to be a slave, even—*if only* he can get another "hit" of the beloved's beauty. Such a lover is like a drug-addict in need, and so, perhaps, the "divine" erotic mania reveals itself to be more akin to the "divine" prophetic mania of the fume-befuddled Pythia.⁵⁹ If so, perhaps the non-lover was right to argue that

⁵⁸ Ferrari likewise notes that it is puzzling that Socrates begins his paean to divinely-mad lover by painting divinely-inspired love's effects "with a decidedly sickly complexion of mingled pleasure and distress" (*Listening to the Cicadas*, 150). As we'll go on to clarify, the point of distinction concerning the divinely-mad and humanly-sick lovers' relation to pleasure is that the divinely-mad lover is not wholly directed toward pleasure as the humanly-sick lover is. This is not to say that the divinely-mad lover has no desire for pleasure (he does) nor that the divinely-mad lover should completely quell his desire for pleasure (he shouldn't); rather, the point is that the divinely-mad lover is not *consumed* by his desire for pleasure. When the divinely-mad lover is rightly directed, he will also seek out and partake in proper pleasure (recall that once the charioteer sees the superheavenly things and is nourished thereby the soul "re-enters heaven, returning home. When she arrives, the charioteer takes the horses to the manger, providing nectar for feed and ambrosia for drink;" 247e).

⁵⁹ A research team published a study about 20 years ago suggesting that geological and chemical conditions at Delphi could account for the Pythian oracle's manic prophecy, for intoxicating vapors could have seeped up into the temple from underground reservoirs. As Daryn Lehoux notes in "Drugs and the Delphic Oracle," *Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (2007), the study's suggestions were quickly sensationalized, and so a "popular" consensus began to emerge that this was the true explanation for Delphic prophecy. As Lehoux explains, other studies emerged shortly afterwards which showed that the claims of the original study were vitiated by some faulty assumptions, faulty logic, and implausible inferences; further, the toxicological explanation for the Pythian trances doesn't accord with ancient

friendship (*philia*) is simply incompatible with love (*erōs*), for the divinely mad lover would turn out to be no different from the humanly mad lover, were this the end of the story;⁶⁰ accordingly, better to go back to the non-lover to reap the benefits and advantages that attend his friendship. Though Socrates does not here use the term *pharmakon* (drug, remedy, philter, poison, etc.) as he does elsewhere in the *Phaedrus*, he does refer to the lover's soul as "finding" (*hēureke*), in the beloved, "the only doctor (*iatron*) for her greatest labors and joys" (252a-b). Of the four uses of *pharmakon* in the dialogue, three deploy the formula "finding the drug" (*heuriskein to pharmakon*; 230d, 274e, 275a), and the fourth (270b) extends the meaning of *pharmakon* by comparing the doctor's art (*technēs iatrikēs*) to the rhetorician's insofar as both apply some tool of their craft (drugs and diet; words and customs) for the sake of the well-being of the object of their craft (health of the body, excellence of the soul). Just as the doctor prescribes herbal *pharmaka* to elicit changes in the body, so does the rhetorician prescribe verbal *pharmaka* to elicit changes in the soul.⁶¹ The conjunction of "finding," "doctor," and "drug" in these other remarks invites us to consider whether there is a "pharmacological" aspect to the divinely-mad lover's pursuit of his beloved. What we find is that the same ambiguity that attends *pharmaka* (life-saving remedy or life-destroying poison?) shows up in the lover's loving of the beloved's beauty.

11. The beloved's beauty is a *pharmakon* for the lover, and it drives him mad. As we see in the anti-erotic speeches, this madness can be of the poisonous variety, since it leads the lover into sickness and affliction (231d, 236b), weakness (233c), hubris (238a-c), enslavement

evidence for how a typical mantic session would unfold, and the study's appeal to the ancient evidence (e.g., in Plutarch's *On the Obsolescence of Oracles*) fails to attend to important hermeneutical difficulties that attend the study of Hellenistic philosophy.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Sheffield, "Beyond Eros," 254-255.

⁶¹ Cf. Socrates's argument on Protagoras's behalf in *Theaetetus* 166d-167d. Socrates himself suggests such a verbal *pharmakon* (in conjunction with an herbal *pharmakon*) to Charmides in *Charmides* 155e.

to pleasure (238e, 239c, 240d), jealousy (239b), internal inconsistency (241a), inability to uphold promises (241b), and, in general, neglect of one's social and familial duties while in the grips of manic love. The Palinodic depiction of the divinely-mad lover likewise seems to begin as if love were a poisonous *pharmakon*, as the anti-erotic speeches claim, for it leads to a similar dependency and neglect of social and familial duties. But before this preliminary depiction prematurely convinces us that Lysias was right all along (contrary to the impetus of 245b), we should note that with reference to the aforementioned remark (255a), something changes in the lover's outlook whereby he ceases *pretending* to serve the beloved and begins to undertake *genuine* service. After the lover has been driven out of his mind by the beloved's beauty, the "poison" reveals itself to be, in truth, a remedy, one capable of providing the "greatest of good things" for the lover (244a, 245c, 256e). It is the remedy administered by the beloved, "the only doctor" for the lover's soul (252b). This is true not only of the lover, but also of the beloved who begins to experience return-love (*anterōs*) and its benefits only after the lover undergoes this change. This shift from human poison to divine remedy characterizes each of the "pharmacological" aspects of the *Phaedrus*: soul-leading, *erōs*, *logos* (especially written *logos*), divine possession, the Cicadas, and even Phaedrus himself are each presented initially as dangerous drugs that can lead someone down a path that is contrary to their own well-being and flourishing. But, when these *pharmaka* are reconnected to the divine (or, more accurately, when we undergo a change in perspective so that we can see them for what they really are, that they are always already connected to the divine in principle), they become the means by which one can receive the greatest of all good things.⁶² Each of these drug-like phenomena

⁶² On the ambivalent character of soul-leading, later disambiguated as a great good, see Asmis, "Psychagogia," 154-157; cf. Moore, "Socrates *Psychagōgos*," 43. More generally, see Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 35-36. Whereas "soul-leading" would ordinarily have the dark connotation of necromancy for Plato's audience (and thus would be understood as an act which disrupted the natural order), we might also see in it Socrates's practice of calling back to life souls whose way of life orients them toward death

presents a danger insofar as it opens the door to an upheaval of the moderation and right opinion that work to keep hubristic desire at bay (cf. 265a; *Laws* 645d-650b), but, when divinely-directed, this loosening of the hold of moderation and right opinion is what allows us to pursue, unhindered, what we desire most deeply.⁶³

12. The lover's transformation, which corresponds to a change in the reception of the beloved's beauty, takes place on account of the lover's being transported by the beloved's beauty to a memory of the divine. Lovers begin to "do everything they can to help" the beloved become like the god of whom the beloved is a reminder. At the exact center of the dialogue, we find Socrates describing lovers who are *learning* how to serve (252e); they want to do so because they are "fiercely driven to gaze upon the god" (253a). By serving the beloved, lovers "make contact with a god through memory," and it is only *after* they make such a contact that they "attribute the cause of these feelings to the beloved" and "adore him even more dearly" (253a). One could say that the lover had been using the beloved as a mere *means* to his fulfillment (through recollection of the divine), and that the lover's fumbling attempts at service were part of the process of getting there. But *after* the lover has made contact with the

on account of their *erōs* being directed, wrongly, toward what is unreal. On the ambivalence of *logos*, see Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 25-34 and Lavilla de Lera, "Prayer to Pan," 84. The ambivalent character of *logos* also shows up in the duality of the Cicadas, who, on the one hand, act as Sirens who lure and lull sailors to death (against which we must be on guard), and who, on the other hand, act as daemonic intermediaries, passing messages back and forth between human beings and the Muses; cf. Gonzalez, "I Have to Live in Eros," 233, and Sweeney, "Pedagogical Settings," 99-101. On the ambivalent character of Phaedrus and his later disambiguation, consider especially Socrates's two prayers (257b, 279c). While Phaedrus is on the one hand responsible for drugging Socrates (*katapharmakeuthentos*; 242e), leading Socrates to speak blasphemously about Eros, he is also, on the other hand, responsible for leading Socrates out of the city to the grove (the *katagōgē*, the "leading down place") in the first place, and he does this by means of *logos*. We'll discuss the ambivalence of Phaedrus and its effect on Socrates in greater detail in Chapter 5. The fact that Phaedrus leads Socrates by means of *Lysias's* love-blaspheming *logos* underscores the dialogue's persistent suggestion that even the deadliest of poisons can become beneficial under divine direction (cf. Moss, "Soul-Leading, Again," 11, on the potential fruitfulness of left-handed love).

⁶³ On this point and the relevance of the *Laws* to the *Phaedrus*, see Belfiore, *Socrates' Daimonic Art*, Ch. 6

divine, his love, his *erōs*, is transformed by a newfound *care* (*epimeleia*), expressed in a genuine service (*therapeia*). A love which had been essentially self-serving has, through its ecstasy, transformed into a loving care oriented fundamentally toward the beloved's well-being.⁶⁴ By being lifted up to the divine, the lover's manner has changed; he now understands, for the first time, the proper way to love his beloved.⁶⁵ Without the rapturous memorial contact with the divine, without the recollection of Beauty, the lover could never have begun to love the beloved with the beloved's good as his primary motivation.

13. It may, perhaps, seem odd to describe the lover's experience simultaneously with an account of the lover's turning inward ("making contact with the god he followed through memory") and with an account of the lover's turning outward (the lover's ecstasy, in which he stands outside himself—*ek + stasis*); nevertheless, both aspects of the lover's experience are crucial to the Palinode's account. Despite the apparent locative contradiction, these two aspects of the lover's experience are two sides of the same coin, for one's "true self" is not just what happens to be one's actions and experiences (the *pathē te kai erga* of 245c); rather one's true self is found in one's being-together-with (or, at least, moving toward being-together-with) that which one *truly* desires.⁶⁶ One's true self is not merely being a certain sort,

⁶⁴ Pieper notes that those who lust are characterized by a means-end relationship wherein the beloved is just part of a calculation, as in Lysias's speech, whereas true lovers don't simply want the object of desire (as that by which their desires can be satiated) but also desire what's *good* for their beloveds (see *Enthusiasm*, 82).

⁶⁵ In order to love well, one must be made adequate to the task; cf. VII.343e-344a. McCoy suggests something similar of the philosopher's return to the cave: while it may be the case that the philosopher must be compelled to return *the first time*, there's reason to think that repeated ascent and time will lead the philosopher to see the merits of life in the cave, which is, after all, full of *images* of the things she saw while outside. Accordingly, the philosopher learns to love what's within the cave after having come to recognition of what's outside the cave. See *Image and Argument*, 233-237. "If indeed Socrates thinks that the visible world is modeled on the intelligible world in which it participates, and has the 'look' of the ideas after which it is patterned, then by virtue of its similarity to the forms, the visible world becomes lovable as well insofar as it displays the goodness, justice, beauty, and so on of the forms" (235).

⁶⁶ Cf. Aryeh Kosman, "Platonic Love," *Virtues of Thought: Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 35. As Augustine says in *Confessions* XIII.9.10, "A body gravitates to its

but being a certain sort *well*, flourishing. What it is to be soul—its essence and account (*ousia te kai logos*; 2453)—is to be self-moving. But motion, and consequently self-motion, is only intelligible with respect to its “from which” and “to which” (*poi de kai pothen*; 227a),⁶⁷ or, as the myth suggests concerning the perfect type of motion, its “around which,” in which case, the “from which” and the “to which” converge. The soul finds its true self by going out beyond itself to the thing it loves,⁶⁸ and, in the process, finds that the ultimate beloved object, the true beings in the superheavenly place, are not simply external (or transcendent) to the soul, but are also *in* (or immanent to) the soul in memory.⁶⁹

proper place by its own weight. This weight does not necessarily drag it downwards, but pulls it to the place proper to it. [... D]rawn by their weight, things seek their rightful places. They are not at rest as long as they are disordered, but once brought to order they find their rest. Now, my weight is my love, and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me.” Or, to put the point in terms which are closer to Plato in time, we could say, with Aristotle, that one’s true self is in one’s “second *entelecheia*,” one’s “being-fully-oneself,” wherein one’s primary potencies are both developed (“first” *entelecheia* = “second” *dunamis*) and “at-work” (“second” *entelecheia* = *energeia*). Given that the human being is defined by its intellectual capacity to be at one with (“commune” with) the object of knowledge in the act of knowing, and given that all human beings by nature *stretch themselves out* toward knowing (*Metaphysics* I), being at one with what one truly desires would be to be in a kind of loving communion with the ultimate object of knowledge, the Good, desirability *per se*.

⁶⁷ See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 107-108 on the different registers in which one can hear the dialogue’s opening question, including the “highest level [...] about the ultimate whither and whence of the human soul.” The significance of the multiple registers of the framing question should, it would seem, be complemented by a corresponding analysis of the different registers in which one can hear the dialogue’s concluding hortatory subjunctive (*iōmen*, 279c), though Sallis neglects to do so, concluding his treatment of the *Phaedrus* instead with an open-ended question; cf. 175. Sallis has recently given a more general treatment of the significance of frames (with special reference to the framings of Platonic dialogues). In “Frames” (*Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 3 [2020]), he writes: “In the case of a picture and even more directly in that of a dialogue, the by-work directs the viewer/hearer into the work itself. Indeed, in the case of dialogues, which for us are almost exclusively works to be read, this directive capacity is especially prominent. In a sense the entire by-work is for the sake of the work itself” (247). Likewise, see Taylor, *Philosophy and Writings of Plato*, 90. We’ll return to the dialogue’s dramatic framing in §2 of the next chapter.

⁶⁸ This is suggested by the fact that the charioteer finds in the superheavenly place that which nourishes it (247d). We will forever feel incomplete except insofar as we are “perpetually initiated” (249c), the meaning of which we discussed in the prior chapter, and the possibility of which we will discuss in succeeding chapters.

⁶⁹ See note 97 to Ch. 2.

14. The metaphor of “height” and the metaphor of “inwardness” converge in the mythic account of the soul’s ascent and its recollection thereof. Beauty, in the beloved, pulls the lover outside himself, toward the beautiful beloved, on account of which the lover makes contact with the god whom he followed through memory; ultimately, through this gravitational pull, the lover is transported back to Beauty itself.⁷⁰ By being so pulled, the lover is brought once again into the superheavenly place (in memory), by which he was nourished and is now nourished again. By being nourished, by coming back into contact with the superheavenly beings, the lover himself becomes like the gods, who are divine by being close to the superheavenly things (249c). By becoming like the gods in their proximity to the superheavenly beings, the lover takes on their properties (253a; cf. *Theaetetus* 176b), especially, generosity, non-envy (cf. 247a, 253b), and care (cf. 246b, 246e, 255a).⁷¹

15. Hence, the lover now leads the beloved “into the service and ways of the god,” and does so “without envy or stingy ill-will” (253b-c). The lover passes on to his beloved that which he had experienced in his memory of the divine—generosity, non-envy, and care. The ascent through memory to the divine is *completed* in a corresponding descent whereby one cares as the gods care.⁷² In doing so, the lover has *become* like the non-jealous gods (247a), who care

⁷⁰ As we’ll go on to discuss below, it’s crucial that we recognize that *both* the beloved and Beauty itself are rightfully said to be the objects of the lover’s *erōs*. The lover is ecstatically drawn to *both*, though commentators frequently argue for the lover’s love to be directed toward one to the exclusion of, or trivialization of, the other.

⁷¹ See Fussi, “As the Wolf Loves the Lamb,” 70: “Being nourished by truth and being capable of generosity are strictly connected features for Socrates, given that he chooses them as the two distinguishing traits of the gods.”

⁷² Thus, my argument (developed a bit further in §4-5 below, as well as in Ch. 6) complements the arguments made by Schindler in *Plato’s Critique* (cf. esp. 159) and in “Plato and the Problem of Love” about the necessity of “positive” descent which completes the erotic ascent in the *Symposium* and the ascent out of the cave in the *Republic*. As Schindler argues, the ascent is a process of adequation, whereby our perspective is elevated beyond itself so that it can come to appreciate *the* measuring stick by which all things are to be understood and all actions to be undertaken—Beauty Itself (see *Symposium* 210eff.), the Good (see *Republic* 505a). Likewise, see A. W. Price, who claims in “Loving Persons Platonically” (*Phronesis*, Vol. 26, No. 1 [1981]) that “personal love” is “*not supplanted, but glorified*” as a result of the

for all that is inferior to them (246e), so that what is not yet well-directed may become so. By making contact with the god through memory and participating in the divine work of service, the lovers “pick up [their god’s] habits and practices to the extent that humans can share in the divine” (253a).⁷³ Just as enjoying contact with the god whom he followed in memory allowed the lover to *reclaim* his true self, so does the lover’s genuine service encourage the beloved to become his true self. “Like inspired Bacchantes following Dionysos,” lovers “pump” the inspiration drawn from Zeus “into the beloved’s soul and make him as similar as possible to their god” (253a-b). Just as the beloved mediated the lover’s self-(re)discovery, so the lover will also mediate the beloved’s self-(re)discovery as they both come to make contact with the god whom they jointly followed and become steeped in that god’s ways, picking up the god’s

ascent, the fruits of which are shared with the beloved (30; emphasis added). As we discussed in Ch. 1, Hermias takes the whole drama of the dialogue as an ascent to and descent from primal beauty (see *Scholia*, 12.31-13.5).

⁷³ If the analysis in this paragraph is correct, we have good reason to suggest that Whiting misses the mark in her otherwise sound rebuttal of Irwin’s rationalist egoist understanding of love when she claims that the Palinode does not just describe “the true lover as abandoning only a ‘narrow instrumental’ form of prudence,” as Irwin claims, but instead that “Socrates depicts the true lover as abandoning the point of view of prudence *full-stop*” (“Love,” 407). The lover’s *immediate* experience of being roused by the beauty of the beloved is indeed a complete abandonment of prudence, as Whiting suggests, but when the lover has made contact with the god he followed through memory on account of his experience of the beloved’s beauty, he is prompted to get his soul in order such that reason is in control and such that the lover can determine how best to *genuinely serve* and care for the beloved. In order to do so, one has to discern which type of soul the beloved has and which type of discourses would be suitable for the beloved’s edification, as we see Socrates do with respect to Phaedrus throughout the dialogue. There is a prudential aspect here (especially given the diversity of manners; cf. Hermias, *Scholia*, 1.5-11), but it is one which is wholly compatible with the “ecstatic,” other-centric nature of erotic mania, which Whiting rightly recognizes is essential to the portrait of love in the Palinode (see *ibid.*, 408). While Whiting is right to note that Plato does seem “to associate the best sort of love or commitment to an ideal with the neglect of one’s own interests even broadly construed” (*ibid.*, 409), unfortunately, she doesn’t construe “one’s own interests” *broadly enough*, for one neglects one’s proximate interests (e.g., comfort, property, family, political standing, etc.) precisely for the sake of one’s *ultimate* interests (*both possessing and bearing witness to the good*, which requires loving the other for the other’s own sake), for the sake of which one “has already forgotten mothers [and] brothers” (252a) and is willing to risk death (*Republic* 517e). To prefer proximate interests over what’s ultimate would be wicked, and wickedness is to be feared more than death, for “wickedness runs faster than death” (*Apology* 39a-b; *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, and Phaedo*, trans. G. M. A. Grube [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002]. Sheffield’s comments on how Plato (and Aristotle) understand the nature of desire and reason differently from the generally Humean tendency of modern thought helpfully clarify the background for this point (see “Beyond Eros,” 269-270).

practices and habits to the extent possible for a human being (253a). As Socrates says, “If lovers obtain what they are eager for (*prothumountai*) in the way I have outlined, the eagerness (*prothumia*) of those truly in love and the initiation rite (*telete*) become both beautiful and blessed (*kale te kai eudaimonike*). It is a blessedness which derives from the love-crazed friend but also benefits the boy who is befriended, provided, that is, the boy is captured” (253c; translation modified). The lover’s *eagerness*, which, perhaps, had been monomaniacal rather than truly manic, has now become beautiful and blessed on account of his memorial contact with his god. Unlike the humanly-mad lover, whose love strips the beloved of all good things and weakens him at every turn, the divinely-mad lover’s eagerness *benefits* the beloved.

16. The transformation of the lover’s service from a pretend service-as-mere-means to a genuine service directed jointly toward the beloved’s flourishing and the pair’s orientation to the god is immediately followed by an account of the internal dynamics of the lover’s soul (a section frequently entitled “the struggle in the soul”).⁷⁴ The wanton horse, which signifies the lust for pleasure, initially tries to wrest control from the charioteer and force the whole company toward a sexual encounter with the beloved (254a).⁷⁵ The charioteer and the obedient horse are, at first, unable to resist the wanton horse’s insistent pull. Eventually, finding “no end to this vice, they are driven on, jointly being led (*poreuesthon agomeno*), both of them yielding

⁷⁴ There are many intriguing details woven into Socrates’s account of the struggle of the soul (253c-255a), but we will only focus on those germane to the point being developed here. Whereas some interpret the *prima facie* odd details, such as the fact that Socrates depicts the lusty black horse as engaging in rational persuasion and the reasoning charioteer as being prone to irrational violence, as indications that there’s something dubious about the surface meaning of the text, others, like Ferrari, have recognized that there are deep philosophical reasons for these apparent oddities which *enrich* the surface meaning of the text rather than efface it. See “The Struggle in the Soul: Plato, *Phaedrus* 2537-255a1,” *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 5 (1985), wherein Ferrari explains how the black horse’s reasoning activity and the charioteer’s equity befit the broader messages of the dialogue.

⁷⁵ It is important to recognize that the wanton horse symbolizes not desire (*epithumia*) as such, within which love (*erōs*) falls (237d), but instead the (seemingly) intransigent desire for pleasure, with which humanly-sick love had been conflated in Socrates’s anti-erotic speech (cf. 237c-238c; cf. also 254a). On this, see Chapter 2.

and agreeing to do whatever is commanded” (254b; translation modified). However, upon approaching the beloved, they see the “darling’s face, flashing like a lightning bolt (*astraptousan*)” (254b), which carries the charioteer’s memory back to Beauty, giving the charioteer newfound strength to resist the wanton horse’s wiles until eventually, through repeated use of the reins, the creature is “humbled” and “follows the charioteer’s plan” (254e).⁷⁶ As in the prior account, wherein the contact with the god through memory transformed the lover’s love from pretend to genuine service, here, the charioteer’s contact with Beauty through memory allows the soul to be harmonized, the wanton horse to be tamed,⁷⁷ and the lover to follow the beloved “with awe and a sense of shame” (254e).⁷⁸

17. In sum, we see that the lover’s experience of love, occasioned by (and mediated by) the beloved’s beauty, produces the following changes in the lover. The lover’s wolf-like acquisitiveness is replaced with a non-jealous care for the beloved. The lover no longer approaches the beloved as a mere means to his own fulfillment, but, instead, has begun to love the beloved, caring, for the beloved’s own sake, as evidenced by the lover’s desire to genuinely serve the beloved. In doing so, the beloved no longer acts merely for his own good,

⁷⁶ While it is true, as we’ve remarked before, that the wanton horse occasions the charioteer’s return to Beauty in memory on account of dragging the soul toward the beautiful beloved, wherein Beauty is to be seen, it is also true that if the wanton horse were left to its own devices and not restrained, the charioteer would not be able to act on its sight, for the wanton horse, insofar as it is untrained, seeks pleasure consumptively, as we argued in Ch. 2. Both aspects are crucial here: our interpretation must balance the role that desire for pleasure plays in pulling us towards a beauty (and thus Beauty) with the role that reason plays in ensuring that we relate properly to both *this* beauty and Beauty itself. Both movements are necessary for us to commune.

⁷⁷ The fact that the vicious horse can be tamed is implied at 247b: “The vicious horse is heavy and *to the extent that it was not trained well* it sinks earthward and weights the charioteer down” (emphasis added). On why we should want to tame (tame, and not completely neuter) the wanton horse, see the previous note.

⁷⁸ My reading and Belfiore’s reading of this part of the Palinode converge; see *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, 229: “Only when the lover has established friendship within his own soul (the first step of the ‘capture’) can he enter into a relationship with the beloved in which *erōs* is combined with friendship (the second step in the ‘capture’).”

but acts in service to the beloved's good, so much so that the lover devotes his attention and energy to helping the beloved come to better resemble the god they jointly followed. No longer does the lover seek to keep his beloved weak, dependent, propertyless, socially disconnected, and subservient; now the beloved strives for the beloved to acquire all genuine goods. This moral shift in the lover's motivations and goals is accompanied by a psychological shift wherein the lover's internal discord is rectified by a newly trained and restrained desire for pleasure. The lover's charioteer has regained his rein, and the charioteer and horses act harmoniously together to move the soul toward that which is fitting for nourishment. Given the newfound internal harmony, the charioteer is newly able to perform his proper function, the direction of the soul.⁷⁹ Accordingly, the soul is no longer led externally toward that which an unrestrained lust for pleasure desires (e.g., "unnatural pleasure;" cf. 251a), but is instead led externally by the gods, especially by Zeus, "the great leader" (246e) to the Plain of Truth. The charioteer and obedient horse are no longer passively, forcibly being led (254b), but now, the whole soul actively follows the gods by taking on their practices and habits (253a). In doing so, the moral formation and psychological harmonization give rise to a further intellectual formation, whereby the soul's intellectual capacity is reactivated through memory, such that the soul now regains an inkling of that Beauty which it had formerly seen. The beloved, who confusedly recognizes the change, soon experiences love overflow (255c) from the lover into him and begins to experience return-love (*anterōs*; 255d). It is the beloved's experience of *anterōs*, which Socrates calls an image (*eidōlon*) of love, that prompts the beloved to undergo a similar love-induced transformation of soul, to which we now turn.

⁷⁹ Cf. Lavilla de Lera, "Prayer to Pan," 79-80, who helpfully notes that the harmonized condition just discussed is the proper reference by which we should understand Socrates's concluding prayer for "inner beauty" (279b).

§3.3. The Beloved's Transformation: Return-Love (*Anterōs*)

18. We've just seen that the experience of love, occasioned for the lover by the beloved's beauty, led the lover to change his outlook from pretending to serve the beloved to genuine service. Love, we argued, induced a moral and intellectual formation in the lover, with the result that the lover's soul was internally harmonized. Having become rightly ordered, it could pursue its own flourishing well by following the gods to that which is the ultimate object of desire. Here we shall more briefly discuss the corresponding formation that takes place in the beloved on account of love. In the beloved's case, love's formation is twofold: the beloved is formed not only by his own experience of love, that return-love (*anterōs*), which is an image (*eidōlon*) of the lover's love, but also by the lover's caring service (cf. 253c). Accordingly, the beloved's formation is caused by the cooperation of both an internal principle of development and an external principle of development; this is akin to the cooperation between the lover's *erōs* and the gods' divine care (*epimeleia*), by which the lover was formed, albeit with an additional mediation (the beloved follows the god by following the lover following the god; the lover initiates the beloved into the initiation into which he himself had been initiated).⁸⁰

19. The lover's mediation of the beloved's formation is best expressed in the claim which follows right after the exact center of the dialogue. After making some remarks about how one's choice of god to follow in the cosmic procession typifies the character of both lover and beloved (cf. §6 of the prior chapter), Socrates says that when lovers acquire their beloveds,

they themselves imitate the god and persuade and discipline (*rhuthmizontes*) the darling, leading (*agousin*) him into the practice (*epitēdeuma*) and pattern (*idean*) of the god, according to each one's ability. They do

⁸⁰ This is also akin to our general claims about the anthropological features of this speech, wherein Socrates seems to suggest that a constitutive feature of the soul is its subjection to both an internal leading and an external leading. A soul is sick to the extent that its internal and external leading principles direct it away from its true nourishment; for a soul to flourish, it must be led rightly, both internally by the charioteer and externally by the gods to the superheavenly place.

so without envy or stingy ill-will toward the darling but in the hope that, trying as hard as they can, they may lead (*agein*) the loved one wholly and entirely to resemble both themselves and the god whom they honor.” (253b-c; translation modified)

Just as the lover’s soul is led by the gods, so is the beloved’s soul led by the gods, but through more proximately being led by the lover. The lover’s caring service for the beloved, by which the lover helps the beloved become more fully himself, occurs through a mediating relation (specifically, leading).

20. After the lover has managed to harmonize his own soul, he is able to help direct the beloved in following suit. By becoming good and picking up the god’s practices and way of life, no longer pretending to serve but now truly serving the beloved (255a), the lover becomes himself something desirable (see esp. 255b), eliciting in the beloved friendship. “His age and necessity compel (*ēgagen*) the boy to admit the lover into his company (*homilian*), as it has never been ordained by fate that vice be dear to vice or that good not be dear to good” (255a-b).⁸¹ Continued adjacency allows for the lover’s flowing desire to overflow into the beloved, so that “the flow of beauty goes back into the beautiful one through his eyes” (255c). The beloved, confusedly seeing his beauty reflected back to him “as though in a mirror,” now

⁸¹ At *Lysis* (trans. David Bolotin [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989]) 214a-d, Socrates explains that when the poets, “our fathers in wisdom and our guides (*hēgemones*),” say that “the god himself makes [friends to be] friends, by leading (*agonta*) them to each other” with verses like “always a god leads (*agei*) like to like,” they don’t mean that the wicked are drawn to the wicked (for to do injustice is to make oneself unlike oneself, is to enflame the civil war in the soul, as Socrates shows in *Republic* I), but instead that the good are “alike and are friends to each other.” But as Socrates suggests at 215a, the good are friends not because of their *likeness*, but because of their goodness (cf. 216c-d). Goodness is a unifying principle (as well as a principle of *positive* differentiation), whereas badness is a disunifying principle. We might here distinguish a principle of positive differentiation—which makes each thing to be more truly distinct by being more truly itself (i.e., it makes x to be not y by making x more fully x), so that to be one and to be something distinct are convertible—from a disunifying principle which, by analogy, we could call a *negative* principle of differentiation for it makes x to be not y by making x to be not x.

begins to yearn for the beloved just as the lover yearns for the beloved (255d), only “less intensely.”⁸²

21. After developing a “return-love” (*anterōs*) on account of the lover’s reflective mediation of the beloved’s own beauty, the beloved undergoes a formation parallel to that which we saw in the lover, especially in terms of the internal harmonization of the beloved’s soul.⁸³ Just as the lover’s vicious horse had attempted to drag his comrades into sexual passion before being restrained (254a-b, d), so here the beloved’s vicious horse, “full to bursting and at a loss what to do, [...] throws itself all over the lover” (256a). Just as the lover’s obedient horse and charioteer resist the vicious horse’s wiles (254a, b), so the beloved’s obedient horse and charioteer resist “from a sense of shame and reason” (256a). Just as the lover’s charioteer eventually manages to train and restrain his vicious horse, so here Socrates indicates the possibility that the beloved’s charioteer will likewise rein in his horses (256a), for,

if the better parts of discursive thinking prevail, as they lead (*agagonta*) toward a regimented life and a love of wisdom, then all involved enjoy (*diagousin*) a blessed and harmonious life here on earth. Self-composed and master of themselves, they have enslaved (*doulosamenoī*) what enables viciousness (*kakia*) to enter the soul and they have liberated (*eleutherōsanteō*) what allows excellence (*aretē*) access” (256a-b).⁸⁴

Given that Socrates contrasts this possibility, whereby the pair receive the greatest good that “mortal moderation or divine madness can provide a human being” (256b), with a second-best experience that occurs when the pair set their sights on something inferior to wisdom, whereby the horses are given more license to direct the two souls’ course of action, it seems

⁸² Socrates’s account here should be read alongside the “self-seeing eye” passage of the *Alcibiades I*, as many commentators have noted.

⁸³ It’s worth noting, before getting into the specifics of that harmonization, that the beloved is not simply loving himself through the lover’s mirroring, as if the beloved were engaging in a strangely mediated autoeroticism (as Kosman argues in “Platonic Love”). Rather, both lover and beloved see in each other a foretaste—albeit, an individuated, personal foretaste—of the Beauty they will remember when they make memorial contact with the god they jointly followed. We’ll develop the lover’s “reciprocity” below.

⁸⁴ I developing a more detailed discussion of this passage with respect to the surprising infrequency of virtue (*aretē*) in “The Liberation of Virtue,” which could function as an appendix to this chapter.

like Socrates intends to suggest that the completeness of the beloved's formation follows upon the completeness of that of the lover, for it is "a lover's friendship" which will bestow upon the beloved "these great and divine blessings" (256e).

22. Though Socrates does not describe it, there is no reason to think that the beloved will not experience, in time and in proportion to the strengthening of his return-love, the same recollective contact with the god they jointly followed, so long as the beloved remains faithful. Doing so will allow the beloved likewise to remember himself and to love caringly. Just as love formed the lover, so too will love form the beloved, for the beloved is no longer simply the recipient of *erōs* (an *erōmenos*) but is now the subject of *erōs* (what we might call an *ant-erastēs*) insofar as he experiences return-love (*anterōs*). Accordingly, we should expect something analogous to the lover's turn from pretend to genuine service in the beloved as he too takes up the practices and ways of the god whom both lover and beloved follow. If, following Socrates's recasting of the norms of the pederastic relationship, we see that the genuine *erastēs* is defined not by his pursuit of sexual favors but instead by a genuine care for the beloved's well-being, we should likewise see that the genuine *erōmenos* is defined not by a mercantile relationship with the *erastēs*, which, like Lysias's nonlover, is always seeking the friendship that confers the most benefit and advantage, but instead by a genuine honor and reverence for his friend (cf. VII.340c-d).

23. While the lover's mediation may not be strictly necessary for the beloved's transformation (for today's beloved is liable to be tomorrow's lover, who could, in principle, undergo the same experiences today's lover underwent), the privileging of the lover's mediating role in the beloved's formation provides for the reader a particularly focused encounter with the role that mediation plays in the *Phaedrus* more generally. We will discuss

this feature of the Palinodic love relationship (§5) before turning to the *Phaedrus*'s drama to see how it reflects the Palinode's account of love's formative effect (Chapter 5). Before doing so, we will discuss the roles of reciprocity, equality, and convergence in the Palinode's lovers' relationship (§4), which will help pull together some of the insights from this section and prepare for the discussion of mediation.

§4. Reciprocity, Equality, Convergence in the Lovers' Relationship

1. It is well-noted that the Palinode's depiction of "erotic reciprocity" is novel to ancient Greek erotic thought. By "erotic reciprocity," I mean that feature of the Palinode's lovers' relationship whereby both lover and beloved are characterized actively as the *subjects* of *erōs*. Traditionally, in both pederastic relationships and heterosexual relationships in ancient Greece, the (male, power-holding) lover is characterized simply as the active subject of *erōs* whereas the (comparatively powerless younger male or female) beloved is characterized simply as the passive object of *erōs*.⁸⁵ By depicting the beloved as being struck by "return-love" (*anterōs*), Socrates has transformed the erotic relationship so that both lover and beloved are both the active subject and the passive object of love.⁸⁶ As we've seen above, the reciprocal erotic relationship has an equalizing effect, for both the lover and the beloved receive nourishment from "in-flowing" Beauty (though the beloved receives this nourishment more indirectly), with the result that the wings of each begin to be refledged and both come to resemble the god whom once followed, whom they will presumably follow again once fully

⁸⁵ See, e.g., David Halperin, "Plato and Erotic Reciprocity," *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1986), 62-66.

⁸⁶ Capra notes that "the word 'counter-love' (*anterōs*) has no real parallel [in Pre-Platonic literature]: all of its very few later instances depend on the *Phaedrus*;" *Plato's Four Muses*, 49. Halperin ("Plato and Erotic Reciprocity," 68) rightly notes that the introduction of return-love "all but erases the distinction between lover and beloved, between the active and the passive partner," but perhaps errs in suggesting that Plato's analysis "eliminates passivity altogether;" cf. Vince Tafolla, "Philosophical Eroticism, or How Socrates Made Me a Man," *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 38 (2018), 6ff.

refledged. Each regains the capacity to return to the superheavenly place in memory, on account of which, each undergoes significant moral and intellectual transformation. This equalizing tendency seems to be one of the major concerns of the *Phaedrus* (as we argued in a different sense in Chapter 3), for it is the unequal power relationship of the traditional erotic relationship which is at stake in the three speeches on love in the *Phaedrus*;⁸⁷ likewise, the dialogue's discussion of rhetoric is largely motivated by the common perception (shared by Phaedrus) that the rhetorical art possesses a "power with a very great force [...], particularly when in the assemblies of the multitudes" (268a), a force that is very attractive to the Athenians (especially the as yet unformed youth) as a means of getting a leg up over their fellow citizens.⁸⁸

2. However, as Vince Tafolla has recently argued, there's a tendency among Plato scholars commenting on the Palinode to jump overly quickly from erotic reciprocity to erotic equality, on account of which, they ignore the lingering hierarchical distinction between the lover and beloved, who are not at equal stages in their respective formations.⁸⁹ As Tafolla notes, "The tendency of Plato scholarship to disavow such hierarchy prevents us from honestly evaluating the structures of authority that are set up within philosophical eroticism.

⁸⁷ Cf. Nicholson, *Philosophy of Love*, 113: "The modern reader should [...] avoid the error of thinking that homosexual sex is the *topic* of the speech. The fact that the *erastēs*, the *erōmenos*, and the *mē erōn* [i.e., the lover, the beloved, and the non-lover] are all male is not the aspect that Lysias, or Plato as the author of the dialogue, wanted to put before us for our judgment. Much closer to the moral content of the speech is the factor of inequality between the man and the 'boy.' Unequal in age, the two of them are therefore unequal in social status, and they have opposite goals, though symmetrical and compatible, in entering into their sexual relationship. This is true equally whether the 'boy' yields to the non-lover or to the lover."

⁸⁸ As Socrates indicates at *Apology* 23c, his own argumentative practices and his capacity to show how his interlocutors who feigned wisdom actually lacked wisdom was also very attractive to the Athenian youth. Separated from the Socratic goal. What perhaps distinguishes Socratic rhetoric from that practiced by the orators is its orientation towards truth, wisdom, self-knowledge, and moderation (a point to which we'll briefly return in Ch. 6).

⁸⁹ See Tafolla, "Philosophical Eroticism," 3. Tafolla's *sed contra*: "I argue that the lover is consistently portrayed as the more active partner, whose greater self-knowledge enables him to interpret and give form to his beloved's desire and, ultimately, to his beloved's character. Thus, rather than marking equality, *anteros* occasions the lover's hierarchical intervention into the erotic life of the beloved" (2).

The particular danger of this is that it leaves unacknowledged relations of power more open to abuse.⁹⁰ Many commentators, for example, take Platonic *erōs* to be essentially “auto-erotic;” that is, when we love whatever we love, what we really love is ourselves in an idealized, flourishing form and whatever is conducive thereunto.⁹¹ Given that the Palinode presents the beloved as both a means to the lover’s flourishing and as actively shaped by the lover, there is some cause to worry that the lover is *imposing* his self-image on a beloved too unformed to recognize what’s happening. Whereas the humanly-sick lover is certainly guilty of exploiting the pair’s power discrepancy in order to keep the beloved weak, foolish, and dependent, here the divinely-mad lover might be taken to be guilty of exploiting the pair’s power discrepancy by “colonizing” the beloved with the lover’s own self-image, regardless of the suitability of this self-image for the beloved, whose return-love is attended by confusion (*aporei*, 255d).⁹² By

⁹⁰ Ibid., 12; cf. 15, also 3: “whereas the mathematician teaches the student about a subject that is distinct from him- or herself, Plato’s philosophical lover claims to teach his or her beloved students who they are and what they desire based upon the philosopher’s own self-understanding. Thus, the domain of knowledge that is relevant to this relationship is much more intimate than other forms of expertise. [...] The intimacy of this form of knowledge and the difficulty of achieving self-knowledge warrants scrutinizing the power dynamic at work in philosophical eroticism lest such teaching turn into subtle forms of coercion.”

⁹¹ Cf. Kosman, “Platonic Love,” 34ff. Likewise, Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 126, 128. Schindler notes that commentators, regardless of whether they praise or censure the point, tend to assume that desire in Plato is “essentially self-centered” (“Plato and the Problem of Love,” 201). Schindler argues that a number of the common objections to Platonic love can be satisfactorily resolved if one rethinks Plato’s account of desire as being both “natural” (i.e., self-referential) and “ecstatic” (i.e., expropriated by the object of love) rather than one or the other (since the two seem to present themselves as dichotomous).

⁹² I borrow the language of “colonization” in this context from Whiting, “Love,” 405-406, who uses it to characterize some problematic features of Irwin’s claim that Platonic love is to be understood as “self-propagation” (i.e., we love what we love in the other in order to ensure the longevity of what we love in ourselves). Davis’s ‘Feuerbachian’ reading of the Palinode is a good example of how auto-eroticism on the part of the lover leads to the lover’s “colonization” of the beloved; see *The Soul of the Greeks*, 200-201, 203. By mistakenly taking the god to be an image of the lover rather than that of which the lover is himself an image, Davis loses the objectivity of the good loved, reducing it instead to a kind of self-projection (and thereby to mere selfness). Whiting’s response to Irwin would apply here as well: “just as the virtuous person values her own activities *not* primarily because they are *hers* but primarily because they are *good*, so too the virtuous person values her friend’s activities *not* primarily because they are *her* own—nor even primarily because they are the *friend’s* own—but primarily because they are *good*” (“Love,” 405). The model for both lover and beloved is neither of them, but instead, the god they jointly follow (406); see also Sheffield, “Beyond Eros,” 263, 265.

taking advantage of this confusion, the lover could direct the beloved's newly-formed desire in whatever way the lover sees fit (just as a wily rhetorician can exploit our confusions about the meanings of words to lead us to think whatever he wishes); in doing so, a "colonizing" lover would be merely loving himself by means of the beloved. His shaping of the beloved would be directed toward his own benefit; any benefit that accrued for the beloved would be incidental. To take equality as entailed *simply* by reciprocity would be to overlook the possibility of this kind of exploitation. Absent any equalizing principle, there is no necessity that a reciprocal love be equal or equalizing.⁹³

3. There are two relevant senses of equality that ought to be distinguished before trying to discern whether there is an equalizing principle operative in the Palinode, on account of which the hierarchical cast of the lovers' relationship avoids falling into exploitation (so long, that is, as both parties remain faithful to a love-relationship structured by that equalizing principle). We can here distinguish between an equality of nature and an equality of disposition. If the lovers are equal in nature or kind, then we should expect that they have the same potencies available to them (however well-developed those potencies might be at a given point in time), or that they undergo the same passions and acts (*pathē te kai erga*, 245c). We argued in Chapter 3 that the souls of both lover and beloved, alongside all other human souls, are equal in kind, for each has seen the true beings and can reckon things according to form. But, as Tafolla reminds us, "Though the end of philosophical eroticism is marked by a convergence of identities and a reduction of hierarchy, the transformation that it effects is not instantaneous."⁹⁴ The lovers' equality in kind does not entail an equality of disposition. The lover is both more quickly and more immediately carried back to a remembrance of Beauty

⁹³ See Tafolla, "Philosophical Eroticism," 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

than is the beloved, whose remembrance only takes place after the lover is formed and after the lover reflects Beauty's radiance back to the beloved. During this time at least, the lover's (educational, formative) disposition is in a better state than that of the beloved, and the lover's charioteer manages to tame his horses well before the beloved's charioteer begins to do so. Because of this discrepancy, the lover is able to lead the follower into the same experiences into which he has himself been led and, by doing so, the lover can mediate for the beloved a god-inspired formation (whereby the beloved, like the lover before him, begins to take on the god's habits and practices). The "adequation" (*ad + equus*, to be made equal to) of the beloved's disposition to that of the lover (and, ultimately, toward that of the god they jointly followed, "if the better parts of discursive thinking prevail, as they lead toward a regimented life and a love of wisdom," [256a]) is a long-term effect of the lover's soul-leading, not something which comes about in the awakening of return-love itself, as the agricultural imagery attest (for the growth of seeds takes time and, on a farm at least, direction by the sower).⁹⁵ As we discussed above, the awakening of return-love in the beloved needs to be followed by a harmonization of the beloved's soul so that the charioteer can take up its directive capacity untrammelled by the horses' antics. The lover can assist the beloved in his internal harmonization by reflecting the beloved's beauty back to the beloved (whereby the beloved can be carried back in memory to Beauty itself, as the lover had previously been carried), by co-resisting any shameful actions on the part of the pair's vicious horses, and by giving form to the beloved's character, redirecting the beloved's desires and instilling good habits.

4. The long-term success of this equalizing process seems to be contingent on three conditions. First, the lover must see the beloved as actually equal (in the sense of kind) and

⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 8-12.

potentially equal (in the sense of disposition), for only an ultimately equally formed beloved could remain faithful to their common journey.⁹⁶ Lovers “search for a beloved” who has the properties of the god whom they jointly follow “by nature” (cf. 252e, 253b); when they have found a suitable nature, they actively “imitate the god and persuade and discipline the darling, leading (*agousin*) him into the service and ways of the god” (253b).⁹⁷ The lover sees in the beloved an image of the god and actively works to help make that image all the stronger and more radiant, so that the beloved can become like the god insofar as its possible (253c).

5. Second, the beloved must actively receive what’s given; the lover cannot benefit the beloved without the beloved’s active desire for and cooperation with that benefit (a point which we’ll take up further in §5 below).⁹⁸ The beloved is initially confused upon the awakening of return-love, and, without the guidance of one who already sees clearly the proper terminus of that newly-awakened desire, it is probable that that beloved’s desire would be misdirected, just as the lover’s desire ran the risk of being misdirected toward the beloved as a *mere* source of pleasure. The lover must work to (re)direct the beloved’s desire so that the beloved wants what’s good for himself (wisdom, as per 256c). But the beloved must commit himself to the

⁹⁶ See Whiting, “Love,” 421, where Whiting discusses the ecstatic nature of love and the “extent to which the lover is willing to be displaced from his ordinary condition by his appreciation of the independent and autonomous values of the beloved.” Further, Whiting suggests that “seeing another—or aspiring to see her—as one’s equal is *part of what it is* to love her” (422). Cf. Sheffield, “Beyond *Eros*,” 261-262.

⁹⁷ The lover, however, does not reserve his goodwill for the beloved alone. Rather, “Each walks in the footsteps of the god he chooses, [...] living out his life in honor of that god, and imitating him to the best of his abilities for as long as he remains uncorrupted and is in his first incarnation here on earth. *He behaves this way to all*: both to those he loves and to everyone else” (252d; emphasis added).

⁹⁸ See Ewegen, “Where Have All the Shepherds Gone? Socratic Withdrawal in Plato’s *Statesman*,” *Plato’s Statesman: Dialectic, Myth, and Politics*, ed. John Sallis (Albany: State University of New York, 2017) for an assessment of the consequences of “leaving” Socrates prematurely. Cf. Tafolla, “Philosophical Eroticism,” 9: “By stressing selection, the agricultural and technical analogies both anticipate and make room for the beloved’s eventual activity. In pedagogical terms, one might say that part of Socrates’ point is that the student needs to ‘put in the work’ in order to discover or recollect his own erotic commitments rather than blindly repeating the words of his teachers.”

work required to receive the gift of wisdom by working toward harmonizing his own soul and committing to the lover's leadership (and, by extension, the god's) as an enduring way of life.⁹⁹

6. Third, the pair must be jointly oriented toward a common object of love, irreducible to either member of the pair. While all three conditions are necessary for the lovers' relationship to be equalized as an effect of the lover's soul-leading, it is the third which is the primary principle of equalization, for it is ultimately the ground of the other two conditions.¹⁰⁰ The lover sees the beloved as an equal in kind (and as one who can become equal in disposition) because the lover sees a trace of the god whom he followed (as well as Beauty itself) in the beloved. Had the lover not come to a recognition of the higher object of love (Beauty) to which the god leads, he would either put the beloved on a pedestal (worshipping him as a god instead of as an image of a god) or he would degrade the beloved to a mere means of fulfillment; in the *Palinode*, the lover makes both mistakes before he makes memorial contact with the god, whereby he comes to recognize the beloved for what he is, godlike but not the god, beautiful but not *the* Beautiful. Likewise, the beloved's nascent return-love requires the beloved's internal harmonization (under the lover's guidance) so that his soul can resist its vicious horse's idolization of the lover (cf. 256a). The beloved must, like the lover, come to a way of life oriented by wisdom rather than some inferior good like honor (cf. 256c)

⁹⁹ Gordon notes that the self-care that would be required of one in the position of the beloved (paradoxically) requires putting oneself in the care of another (*Plato's Erotic World*, 164). Cf. *Alcibiades I* 135b: "And until one has excellence, it is better to be ruled by one's betters than to rule" (*Socrates and Alcibiades: Four Texts*, trans. David Johnson [Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2003]); see also *Alcibiades II* 143b-147d. If one were to recognize that one's flourishing lies in becoming good rather than anything that has to do with *mineness* (or, perhaps better put: if one were to recognize that one's flourishing lies in *conforming* mineness to what's genuinely good), then one would come to recognize that if another has a better claim to seeing the good for what it is, the best way to care for oneself would be to put oneself in the other's care.

¹⁰⁰ See Tafolla, "Philosophical Eroticism," 8: "the lover is also transformed by this process. He 'pattern(s) himself' upon the god, so that he can offer the beloved an image to emulate. This complicates the hierarchy of philosophical eroticism, as it places a standard above the lover, but it does not undo that hierarchy."

or even gratitude toward a kindly patron (cf. 256a). Both lover and beloved become what they become on account of their joint orientation toward the god whom they followed (both are driven to remember the god and to pick up his service and ways) and toward the true beings to which the god leads (both are driven to remember Beauty itself). Mere reciprocity is insufficient for the lovers' formation;¹⁰¹ rather, both must be driven to a good irreducible to either of them, by the imaging of which they come to be the best versions of themselves. It is by nearness to this good that each flourishes (cf. 249c, 278a).

7. In other words, erotic equality is guaranteed by, and erotic reciprocity is completed in, what we can call "erotic convergence," that feature of the Palinode's conception of love whereby the lovers' relationship is not merely interpersonal, but also jointly directed to a common object which transcends both lovers. There are two relevant senses of the lovers' convergence on a common object which transcends both lovers. The more immediately recognizable, common, transcendent object is to be found in the *product* of the lovers' love, of which Diotima speaks in the *Symposium*. A couple's corporeal or spiritual child (i.e., speech), "birthed in the beautiful" (*tokos en kaloi*, 206b), is a place wherein the lovers' gazes converge upon something irreducible to either (though it comes from both), and in doing so, both lovers affirm each other *in* their joint product.¹⁰² This product is the generous "overflow" (*Symposium* 206d) of the lovers' relationship (a point to which we will return in Chapter 6). But the less immediately recognizable, common, transcendent object upon which the lovers converge is

¹⁰¹ See *ibid.*, 13: "It should be clear, then, that the eventual love of the forms is not the inevitable outcome of *anteros*." While at a deep level, our love for the forms is congenital, at another level, our love for the forms is highly contingent on being liberated from false perceptions and opinions which take beloved images *as if* they were themselves the forms, the highest objects of love. Erotic reciprocity is certainly possible under the mistaken view that an inferior (image of the) good is the good itself, but such a reciprocity won't entail equality until it is directed toward an equal good.

¹⁰² Cf. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, §173.

more important than, and both ontological and temporally prior to, the lovers' product; this is Beauty itself, the most radiant of the superheavenly beings. It is only by following love to its *end* (the forms, what's really real, wisdom) that both lover and beloved can love each other *well* (as neither mere means nor as ends per se divorced from the way in which each mediates for the other a return to Beauty by being an image thereof). F. C. White has put the point well:

In short, souls in contemplating the Forms are nourished by them and are made to resemble them, thereby becoming among other things good. But souls which are good, as we have seen from the behaviour of the gods, are other-regardingly good, benevolent toward others. Contemplation of Reality then, on Plato's own doctrine, far from being all-absorbing, renders souls benevolent and caring of others. The closer souls approach to the Forms and the fuller the vision they obtain of them, the more other-regardingly good they become.¹⁰³

As lover and beloved converge in their joint following of the god to Beauty and the other true beings, they each become more like that god and the forms to which the god leads. Both become increasingly lovable in their proximity to what is most lovable of all. Both become increasingly truer lovers in their imitation of the gods, who love both the forms and the images thereof perfectly (cf. *Republic* 402b-c).¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, both lover and beloved are better able to love each other as images of Beauty the more perfectly they follow their god into loving Beauty. If Beauty is characterized essentially by its radiance, the fact that it shows itself in a way outside itself, then to love Beauty wholly *is* to love Beauty as Beauty "beauties," that is, in its radiance. To love Beauty well is to love the various beauties well as well.

¹⁰³ F. C. White, "Love and the Individual," 404. White continues: "The *Republic's* analogy of the sun and the Good reinforces this conclusion. It tells us that the Good is essentially radiant, out-pouring and creative of good beyond it. In proportion then as souls share in the Good and resemble it, they too are radiant, out-pouring and creative of good beyond them." Cf. Schindler, "Plato and the Problem of Love," 216-220 for a discussion of the necessity that loving the absolute Good and Beautiful entails loving relative goods and beauties.

¹⁰⁴ As Schindler argues, the distinction between true love and apparent love is that true love loves the appearances *as well as* the being; love is ordered to the whole—not just the reality, but the reality as it discloses itself in radiant images (cf. *Plato's Critique*, 102).

8. In order to understand love, which, when true, is essentially structured by the aforementioned erotic convergence, we must understand it *analogously*. To speak of an *analogia amoris* here is, in some sense, to recast the mythic language of “recollection” operative in the Palinode. The lover sees the beloved’s beauty, but also *sees through* it to Beauty *per se*.¹⁰⁵ The lover “approach[es] the boy and see[s] the darling’s face, flashing like a lightning bolt (*astraptousan*). With this sight the charioteer’s memory (*mnēmē*) is carried toward the essence of the beautiful (*pros tēn tou kallous phusin ēnechthē*), and once again he sees Beauty itself standing alongside moderation on a holy pedestal” (254b). By seeing the beloved, the lover’s “gaze” is carried past the beloved’s “flashing” visage to the ever more radiant visage of Beauty itself. While the beloved’s beauty is the proximate object of the lover’s love, a love which was *simply* arrested by that beauty would fail to be fully itself (cf. 250e), and, as a consequence, would fail to lead to the lover’s formation (and thereby also fail to mediate the beloved’s formation) since that formation presupposes contact with not just beauty, but the Beauty imaged by this beauty.

9. Love, then, has a kind of “double-intentionality.” On the one hand, love is *of* its proximate object (*this* beauty, here and now, flashing before me), but on the other hand, the proximate object *points beyond itself* to that of which it is an image (see Ch. 6). When love follows the beloved’s “flashing” prompting, it goes beyond the image to the source, Beauty itself, which is the ultimate object of love, something about which one could write endless hymns in the attempt to enter ever more deeply into its mysteries (cf. 247c). For love *to be* love, it must always be *of* both its proximate and ultimate objects.

¹⁰⁵ We’ll discuss the role of “seeing-through” images to their originals, with special reference to images of Beauty, in Ch. 6. Since Beauty is both transcendent to and immanent to beautiful things, we could equally well say that we see Beauty “in” a beautiful thing and that we see “through” the beautiful thing to Beauty.

10. The necessity of retaining a love of the proximate object is twofold. First, we have no unmediated access to Beauty *per se* (in our incarnate lives, at least) but “see” it only through proximate beauties, even though Beauty, in its radiance, has always already given itself over to us. Even before incarnation, we had to be *led* by the gods to Beauty. Beauty is not “visible” to us because it’s “colorless, shapeless” (247c); rather, it is visible to the mind alone. But the mind can’t see Beauty itself by itself without first harmonizing the soul so as to make the ascent, a task which, as we’ve argued (and will continue to argue below), requires Beauty’s work.¹⁰⁶

11. But second, and perhaps more importantly, we do not (*pace* Vlastos) leave proximate beauties behind in the vision of Beauty *per se*, but instead necessarily change our relationships to them; we affirm them as beautiful “in a new light.” We saw this above when the lover’s relationship to the beloved transforms after contact with Beauty. In the dim, derivative light of the various beauties, the lover sees in the beloved only a treatment for his ailment; in the full, radiant light of Beauty, the lover sees in the beloved a godlike beauty which ought to be served. That we do not “leave behind” the other beauties, contra the Vlastosian interpretation in which such beauties are “stepping stones” to be kicked away after one has ascended by means of them, is actually a corollary of our inability to access absolute Beauty absolutely (the first reason for retaining love’s proximate object). However, lest this be taken to imply that we would dispose of the relative beauties if we could, we should note that not leaving behind the relatives is also a corollary of the absoluteness of the absolute. Though what’s relative can oppose itself to the absolute (particularly in the mode of *idolatry*, the denial of the referential character *built into the very notion* of relativity, as we’ll discuss in Chapter 6), the

¹⁰⁶ See also Schindler, “Disclosing Beauty,” 40: “it is the very experience of beauty itself [...] that opens one up to further and deeper experiences of beauty, insofar as the experience of beauty, even in its most bodily aspects, evokes a kind of awe and reverence.”

absolute cannot be opposed to the relative. Rather, the absolute always includes its relative images. To hate *this* good in the name of a love for *the* good would be a confusion, for it would be a failure to recognize that *this* good is good by reference to *the* good, which is present in *this* good; it is by reference to *the* good that *this* good is what it is in the first place. Thus, to love the absolute is always also to love the relative. Both poles must be affirmed, even if we must also acknowledge a certain priority (logical, metaphysical) of the absolute to the relative.¹⁰⁷ But, as we indicated already, one's relation to the relative transforms *in light of* the absolute; one cannot *adequately* relate to the relative until one relates to the absolute in a concordant manner. Hence, neither the lover nor the beloved will love the other adequately until the "arrows of their longing" (to borrow a phrase from Nietzsche) converge on the Beautiful by which the lovers are themselves beautiful.

12. Love's double-intentionality is the anthropological counterpoint to the metaphysics of Beauty in its *radiance* (to be discussed further in Ch. 6). Absolute Beauty *shines through* relative beauties, such that both can (analogously) be called beautiful. This is an expression of the more general metaphysical point: the absolute is accessed through the relative, through which it presents itself to us according to our own mode of reception. *Love, then, is our response to reality's radiant invitation*, which moves from the invitation (the relative good) to the reality itself when it is well-directed.¹⁰⁸ Love is thus, in its primary sense, that yearning

¹⁰⁷ The necessity of not cleaving the absolute from the relative even as one distinguishes them is perhaps Plato's greatest insight; it is what allows him to avoid a stark dualism (as critiqued by the infamous "Third Man" argument in the beginning of the *Parmenides*), a lifeless monism (assailed by the Eleatic Stranger in his "patricide" in the *Sophist*), and an unintelligible relativism (the argument against the "Homeric host" in the *Theaetetus*). Rather, what we see in Plato is an early version of the *analogia entis*. On these points, see especially Perl, "The Presence of the Paradigm" and Schindler, "Plato and the Problem of Love."

¹⁰⁸ We'll justify the language of speaking of reality as "inviting" us into communion in Ch. 6. Though the language of our formulation here implies temporal succession (reality invited us, and then we responded), there's a sense in which the invitation has always already been given (even if we experience it as such at some particular time or another in particularly potent experiences of beauty) and love has always already responded (even if we do not realize it or fail to recognize love's intrinsic directedness to reality).

for reality (the *Seinserstrebnis*, in Heidegger's phrase) which comes to fruition in deep contact with reality and is the response to reality's gravitational pull. This primary sense of love is expressed subjectively as yearning and desire (*epithumia, orexis, erōs*)¹⁰⁹ and objectively as desirability, finality, and irresistibility. It is *only* in light of this primary sense—the soul's yearning for the Good that has generously diffused itself and which is the end of all desire—that the interpersonal sense gets its sense (the particular good of the particular, in its twofold nature as overflowing self-diffusive and as desirable *telos*),¹¹⁰ even if the analogy may not be *immediately* recognized in our experience of love.

13. Since love of the particular is analogously derivative of our loving entry into and contact with reality as such, love of the particular is also *iconic* thereof. Love of the particular is a window into love of reality itself as well as an effect of loving reality. When one loves the particular properly, one's love does not halt at the particular—which would be to make the beloved an *idol*—but instead points beyond the particular to what makes that particular particularly loveable in the first place.¹¹¹ To love the particular *simply*, that is, to love a particular with a love that does not also transcend that particular, is to *denature* both lover and the beloved. A love that non-iconically loves the particular can no longer affirm (and thereby love) the good of that particular, since such a non-iconic love severs the good from the beloved. If one “loves” in this way, one must admit that her beloved *is not* good, since she is loving the

¹⁰⁹ Though these terms fit within a semantic network, they are not synonymous; see note 37 to Ch. 2.

¹¹⁰ If the Good is characterized properly in this two-fold way—as the irresistibly desirable end and as the perfectly generous beginning—we might expect that love, the primary relation we have to the Good, takes on the Good's characteristics in an analogous mode. In the Palinode, we see that the lover becomes desirable and an object of love after he has drawn near to Beauty; likewise, the lover generously overflows—self-diffuses—into the beloved. The lover, by loving the Good, becomes an image of the Good, thereby opening the possibility of mediating the Good for another.

¹¹¹ We saw this earlier at 254b, but we can see it more clearly in the *Symposium's* “ladder of love,” in which each “rung” of the ladder is revealed to have its particular beauty through some cause. To ascend from beauty as effect to beauty as cause is to ascend the rungs until we reach the cause of all (beauties), Beauty itself by itself.

particular *and not* the good. Thus love, which is always love of the good, is no longer love. Likewise, the beloved is no longer what she is, because in separating the beloved from the good, one replaces the good with the beloved, thus treating the particular *as if* it were an absolute.

14. Our desire for contact with (a) reality, which is the essence of knowledge, does not pull us *away* from the beloved, but instead pulls us outside of ourselves *toward* the beloved in such a way that we see more deeply what is present in the beloved. As the Scholastics say, what is most interior is also most common. Because we are pulled into the *reality* of the beloved, past but through the appearance, we are able to be pulled simultaneously through the beloved to the source of what is loveable, which is what is loveable *per se*.

15. If we accept this account of the *analogia amoris*, then we are in a position to deal with Moss's contentions about the contingency of interpersonal love: we must say that it is right, but nevertheless, inadequate. Moss's contention concerning interpersonal love's possible effects is right only when interpersonal love is considered in isolation from the primary sense of love described above, by which interpersonal love is what it is. Interpersonal love can lead to truth and contact with reality because it is love, but it can also lead *merely* to seeing differently, as distinct from seeing truly, to the extent that it is not itself fixated on that which is most lovable. But insofar as love is in some sense a divinely-given *gift*, love is *never* merely interpersonal love (except when such love is a result of *merely* human madness), but also Being's invitation to the lover to enter into *sun-ousia* (being-together-with) with it, absolutely, by entering into *sunousia* (company) with some particular, who is a radiant manifestation of Being itself.

16. By highlighting the effect of the lover's contact with the divine and with Beauty on the lover's capacity to love well and genuinely care for the beloved, we begin to see that interpersonal love can't be considered outside the divine and ontological context in which it is situated. Doing so, we will see that the interpersonal lover's care is a reflection of a universe *fundamentally and providentially structured by care*. Given that love contributes to the lovers' formations, and given that love is always situated within divine care, we must reconsider just how limited interpersonal love is as a soul-leader. This we will take up in Chapter 6.

§5. Mediation and Receptivity in the *Phaedrus*

§5.1. Mediation as an Implicit Theme

1. As we discussed in §3, Socrates characterizes love in terms of mediation throughout the *Palinode*. The beloved mediates the lover's recollective contact with both the god whom he followed and Beauty itself. Likewise, the lover mediates the beloved's recognition of his own beauty, which in turn awakens a recollective contact with the god they jointly followed.¹¹² The lover can be inspired to remember Beauty itself on account of the beloved's beauty and on account of the fact that the lover had followed a god to the Plain of Truth before his incarnate life.

2. The *Palinode* seems to suggest that both of these conditions (having followed the gods and having been reminded of doing so) are necessary. In order to reach the superheavenly place, one must have followed a god, for the gods know the way. Because the gods are generous and non-envious, they won't lead us astray. They make for suitable guides because

¹¹² Griswold notes the way in which the soul cannot come to know itself without the mediating, mirror-like presence of another soul, as showcased in the lovers' relationship; cf. *Self-Knowledge*, 32.

they, unlike us, won't be waylaid by internal disobedience and disharmony. All human souls have always already been so led, since that is a necessary condition for being human (see Chapter 3). But in order to remember having done so (and thereby return to the superheavenly place in memory), one must be *struck* by something which has sufficient power to remind, as well as be able to “correctly handle such reminders” (249c). Being able to correctly handle reminders requires a moral and intellectual formation so that one can both 1. recognize the distinction between reminder and that of which the reminder is a reminder, between iconic image and the reality imaged, and 2. remain faithful to the reality imaged, which requires, to a certain extent, preferring it to the image by which it is imaged. The beautiful beloved is certainly capable of striking the lover, especially since Beauty shines radiantly in its images, whereas “there is no shine” in the earthly images of the other forms in the superheavenly place (250b).¹¹³ Likewise, as we will argue later (Chapter 6), *language*, even written language, can remind us (cf. 276d) of what we had seen before birth, for language too partakes of the radiant quality of Beauty (recall that the whole of the post-Palinodic discussion of language, rhetoric, and writing is governed by the question “how can one speak or write *beautifully* [*kalōs*, 259e]”). As we've argued above, the experience of love can help teach us to correctly handle reminders; as we'll go on to argue, so can language.

3. The place of mediation in the *Phaedrus* is not restricted to the Palinode's account of love. Though the roles that the lovers play with respect to each other in mediating memorial contact both with the god they followed and with Beauty itself are perhaps paradigmatic for the *Phaedrus*, we see plenty of other exempla of mediation along the way. The gods of the place, and perhaps even the trees, are active and seem to be inspiring Socrates to speak as he

¹¹³ As we'll discuss in Ch. 6, the reason Beauty is differentiated from the other superheavenly realities in this way is because it has a special relationship to appearance and to the phenomena of our experience.

does (as we'll discuss at greater length in Chapter 5). The Cicadas, like the *Symposium's daimonia*, who interpret and transport messages between the gods and human beings (202e), are said to be intermediaries between human beings and the Muses, to whom they report on human conduct and from whom they have gifts to give to those human beings who honor them by living rightly (259a-d). Socrates thrice refers to poets and the poetic tradition as mediating a remembrance or understanding of some point (Sappho and Anacreon at 235c, Ibycus at 242c-d, and Stesicohrus at 243a-b); likewise, Socrates uses a number of myths (Boreas, Cicadas, and Theuth and Thamus) to help direct and redirect the conversation.

4. To see mediation play such a prominent role in a dialogue which devotes much of its time both to love-matters and to the divine is, perhaps, unsurprising. We are familiar with mediation playing a significant role in Plato's other dialogue primarily devoted to *erōs*, for mediation is built into the very *framing* of the *Symposium* (Apollodorus tells a Comrade about some other time he told an unnamed friend about what that friend had heard from Phoenix, who heard what he heard from Aristodemus, from whom Apollodorus heard the story of the gathering at Agathon's; 172a-174a), a framing which anticipates Diotima's teaching about the way in which one must come to the love of Beauty Itself by way of passing through different gradations of relative beauties (210e-212a), if, that is, a leader leads correctly. Further, that mediation has a role to play in our dealings with the divine is basically axiomatic for the Greeks and other ancient cultures. In the *Ion*, the other dialogue which thematizes divine inspiration, we hear of how we, the audience of stories about the gods, are inspired by the performance of the rhapsode, who is in turn inspired by the epics of the poets, who are in turn inspired by the Muses (533dff.). The gods frequently act through *daimonia* and other intermediaries, and when they do act on their own, they often present themselves in various disguises or transform

themselves into some mundane form suitable for their purpose (Zeus in particular is well-known for doing so). The poetic tradition offers different interpretations of the necessity of mediation in our experience of the divine—it would be unbecoming of the divine majesty to condescend to the level of us unworthy ones, we would not be able to handle the divine’s full presence, the gods need to stoop to using guile and subordinates in order to effect their plans, etc. Later Platonists took the necessity of mediation between us and the highest reaches of the divine so seriously that they started multiplying *daimonia* to fill up all of the different levels of reality between us and the highest divine beings (see, e.g., Apuleius’s *On the God of Socrates*).

5. But regardless of whether mediation was already “in the air,” we wonder instead why Plato decided to devote so much of the *Phaedrus* to mediation as a kind of implicit theme of the dialogue. The answer that the *Phaedrus* seems to indicate is twofold. 1. The *Phaedrus* focuses on mediation because of us (the subject-side of the issue): we cannot *im*-mediately grasp the ultimate object of our desire, on account of which we can’t secure our flourishing without the mediation of other beings who help “adequate” us to grasp that object. 2. The *Phaedrus* focuses on mediation because of its metaphysical vision (the object-side of the issue): “really real reality” presents itself to our incarnated intellects indirectly by means of “radiant images.” Being “meets us where we are,” so to speak. Since we have yet to discuss the *Phaedrus*’s metaphysical vision directly (see Chapter 6), we’ll here focus on the subject-side of the necessity for mediation as part of the task (begun in Chapter 2) of discerning the anthropological features required for a genuine communion with Being. As we’ll discuss below, Plato emphasizes both the subject- and object-sides of the necessity for our communion with Being to be mediated by means of his repeated, resonating uses of the semantic network of leading and following.

§5.2. The Role of Receptivity in the *Phaedrus*: Plato’s “Anti-Pelagianism”

6. We are not equipped by our own natures to adequately grasp the very thing for which we most long.¹¹⁴ As Chapter 2 argued, every human soul longs for communion with “really real reality” in the superheavenly place. All beings move toward their complete flourishing insofar as it is possible, and it is only by coming into communion with “really real reality” that our souls can be *fully* nourished (recall that the “food” that is good for the charioteer is found in the Plain of Truth, which the charioteer seeks before returning to the heavens to feed his hard-working horses, 247c-e). All human souls are “unfulfilled” (*ateleis*, 248b) to the extent to which they are not (yet) “perpetually initiated into these perfect mysteries (*telous aei teletas teloumenos*)” (249c) of “really real reality” in the superheavenly place. The soul strives for a perpetual togetherness with the object of its longing.¹¹⁵ Recall that in Chapter 3 (§4) we located the reason for why all souls leave the sight of Being “unfulfilled” (*ateleis*, 248b) in the nature of the soul’s *indigence* rather than in the nature of Being itself. Being

¹¹⁴ Schindler argues that the prisoner can’t release himself from his bondage in the cave, for is he bound by an absolutization of an inadequate criterion by which he might assess the truth of what’s presented to him; because he can’t see beyond that criterion and can’t see the shadows on the wall as *images* of reality rather than reality itself, he can’t escape the cave—unless, that is, something *breaks in* which is irreducible to the prisoner’s truncated view of reality (see *Plato’s Critique*, 173). We have here the beginnings of a response to Hyland’s claims about the intellectual limitations that follow from our finitude: intellectual perfection is, in a sense, beyond us, but *we are not the only parties involved*. Hyland doesn’t consider the possibility that something adequate to the task can *break into* our perspective and elevate it so as to move us toward an intellectual perfection unavailable to us unaided. Cf. *ibid.*, 132-133: the soul can’t reach what is ultimate unaided; what’s ultimate has to *reveal* itself; indeed, the good, which is beyond being and knowledge, draws right reason beyond its unaided capacities, resulting in reason’s “surprised” fulfilment (as in a tragedy, wherein the “reversal” is not something that could be expected beforehand but ultimately makes sense of what’s come before in a way that no one could have foretold; cf. *ibid.*, 146-137; see also Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 62). A corollary to this point is that reason cannot aspire to the whole except by renouncing its power over it (cf. Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 22), a point for which we’ve been prepared by our analysis of reality-resistant autarky in Ch. 2. A further implication is that by renouncing one’s power over reality and beginning to abide by its term, love’s intentionality reverses directions: no longer does the soul say “what I love is good,” but instead “what is good, I love” (*ibid.*, 204).

¹¹⁵ Recall Diotima’s claims that “Love is about neither half nor whole, unless, my comrade, it happened to be somehow good” (*Symposium* 205e), and “Love is of the good’s being one’s own always” (206a).

does not “withdraw” from us (as Kirkland has suggested),¹¹⁶ but generously gives itself over to us (as we’ll discuss at greater length in Chapter 6). We are always already in contact with the object of our desire, but we have not yet adequately received it, and thus we remain unfulfilled until we do so, despite already having what we seek. We have a tendency to fail to see reality’s self-gift for what it is, and there is good reason for this tendency. When our souls have yet to be internally harmonized, we fail to pursue the true good for which we long with one mind and one heart. We pull ourselves apart by pulling ourselves in antipodal directions as different elements of the soul momentarily become hegemonic (as we see in Socrates’s anti-erotic speech). Or, if the soul achieves a certain bastardized harmonization, wherein one of the horses becomes completely dominant, we simply seek the good in a place wherein we can never truly find it (as we argued in Chapter 2, §3).

7. Our reflections on the lovers’ formation seem to further illuminate the soul’s indigence with respect to its capacity to grasp that for which it truly longs. Neither lover nor beloved could approach the Plain of Truth in memory except by way of each other. Each required the other to mediate memorial contact with the divine, without which the lovers would remain mired in the extractive relationship depicted by the anti-erotic speeches. Uninspired lovers seek beloveds for the sake of gratification and domination; uninspired beloveds seek lovers for the sake of benefit and gain. Uninspired lovers, in an act of performative contradiction, seek to *suppress* the very things which contribute to the beauty of the beloved so as to keep the beloved under their sway, since they are compelled to pursue pleasure rather than goodness (239c). But lovers who are struck by beauty, however incipiently, begin to be healed and nourished by reception of “the in-flowing of beauty through the eyes”

¹¹⁶ See Kirkland’s “Socrates *contra scientiam, pro fabula*,” which we discuss in Chapter 5.

(251b). Doing so both strengthens the soul's wings and helps the charioteer rein in the horses, better allowing the soul to follow the gods back to the superheavenly place wherein the soul's charioteer can find the "food" suitable to it.

8. Given that all human beings are, by nature, lovers of beauty (237d), and given that all human beings, by nature, have seen Beauty itself in their prenatal cosmic journey (Chapter 3), all human beings, divinely-inspired and uninspired alike, are equipped to receive Beauty's "in-flowing" nourishment by means of Beauty's images here. Further, all human beings are inclined to receive this nourishment at a deep level, even if that inclination is filtered through mistaken understandings of how to pursue it. What, then, accounts for the difference between uninspired and inspired lovers? Why would the gods inspire one lover and not another? *The gods, in their generous non- envy, don't pick and choose which lovers to uplift.*¹¹⁷ "Whoever is willing and able can follow behind, since Envy stands outside the space of the divine dance" (247a). All are welcome in the divine dance. Given that we've already argued that *all* human souls are *able* to follow (Chapter 3), what remains to differentiate inspired lovers from their uninspired counterparts is *willingness*. Our willingness is insufficient to return us to the superheavenly place on its own, but *we* can pick and choose whether we want to be *receptive* to something beyond ourselves and our immediate inclinations (and thereby to what the gods have always already given), and we do so by choosing to lead our lives through in one way or another. Of course, there may be many forces in our lives which pull us away from choosing to receive what has been given (cf. 250a), but we are also confronted by myriad "reminders," each of which

¹¹⁷ Cf. Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 16-17.

presents us with another opportunity to choose to live differently. Inspiration has been given to all but has not (yet) been received by all.¹¹⁸

9. Mediation plays such a profound role in the *Phaedrus*, then, to emphasize that we can't achieve what we want by the strength of our own power and activity alone; rather, we must be (actively) *receptive* to that which can lead us up past the limits of our unaided active powers. Only when the soul is first receptive to the mediating activity of something "above" it can its own active powers take the soul up (or cooperate with its being taken up) into communion with Being. All human souls can come to the Plain of Truth only by following in Zeus's wake as members of his divine army. Lovers can only be led back to a memory of Beauty by first receiving the "in-flow" of Beauty by means of Beauty's radiance in the beautiful beloved. Beloveds can likewise only be led back to that memory by seeing their beauty reflected in their lovers' eyes. In each case, the activity (following, loving) by which we attempt to secure our flourishing is conditioned by a prior moment of receptivity (and we will see that something analogous holds for our relation to language). Our activity is a willing and receptive co-operation rather than something which simply proceeds from us. While all souls are essentially

¹¹⁸ Despite being a largely apolitical dialogue, almost unique amidst the corpus for being set outside the city, the *Phaedrus* has a profoundly political undercurrent. Given that the Palinode seems to take our failure to get a good glimpse of the superheavenly place as something caused by our own jealousy and/or envy (*phthonos* could mean either in this case) when following behind the gods in the ascent, and given that the dialogue's primary explanation for how an incarnate soul can be corrupted is that it is led astray by some other, the dialogue seems to lay a significant amount of responsibility on others for our own individual salvific statuses. Others can actively (if perhaps unintentionally) weigh us down, preventing us from returning to the place wherein we find nourishment. On the other hand, the dialogue's focus on psychagogic love and psychagogic language, whereby one person can lead another out of corruption and into right relationship with reality, shows that our relationship to our peers and our society need not (and ought not) be taken as a hindrance to our well-being. Our well-being is expedited by our good associations even as it is hindered by our bad associations. From this perspective, we are invited to see Socrates's 'apostolic' dismissal of Phaedrus and of himself as Socrates's indication that the two should bear witness in the city to the truth to which they've been transported. Socrates and Phaedrus leave to persuade others—significantly, powerful rhetoricians—of what they themselves have been persuaded, thereby (in principle) reshaping the *polis*.

self-movers, they are flourishing self-movers only to the extent that their self-motion is not *simply* self-motion. Only self-moving souls in whom self-motion is directed by a prior, directive activity—that is, only souls who *suffer* divine madness, who are led by the gods (or by that to which the gods are themselves led)—can become whole, harmonious, and fully nourished. Souls that seek to achieve their flourishing simply on their own terms will inevitably fail to do so (as we saw in Chapter 2’s arguments about the problem of autarky).¹¹⁹ The *Phaedrus*, then, is Plato’s “anti-Pelagian” masterpiece.¹²⁰

10. If I am correct in claiming that Plato implicitly thematizes mediation in the *Phaedrus* in order to emphasize the receptive, cooperative aspect of our pursuit of flourishing, then we should consider how the soul can be receptive to and cooperate with the activity of something prior to it.¹²¹ The *Phaedrus* indicates that the charioteer, the soul’s rational capacity, is the only truly *receptive* power of the soul. The horses (or the anti-erotic speech’s two leading “forces”) are primarily active, motive powers; they are receptive only insofar as they receive direction from the charioteer when they are rightly ordered. Left to its own devices (as we saw in Chapter 2), the wily horse will pursue the object of its desire (pleasure) carnivorously, seeking not to receive but to consume and subjugate. Left to its own devices, the tame horse will

¹¹⁹ Cf. Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 60-61.

¹²⁰ Pelagianism, a soteriological view condemned as heresy by the 5th century Christian church under Augustine’s influence, is marked by the belief that human free will is sufficiently powerful (on account of being, contrary to orthodoxy, unhindered by original sin) to achieve human perfection without divine aid. By calling Plato “anti-Pelagian” I intend to claim that for Plato, the satisfaction of our deepest desire is achievable (contrary to the “tragedians of reason”), but not without the aid given by the divine and by reality itself (contrary to those, like Nussbaum, who read Plato as a proto-Cartesian technocrat). We’ll discuss the way in which reality itself is active in “offering” the aid needed by the soul in Chapter 6.

¹²¹ By speaking of a “prior” activity, I mean ontological priority, not temporal priority (though in some cases temporal priority might also apply). X is ontologically prior to y if x is “more real” than y is (as, for example, the forms are prior to their instances by being *ontōs onta*, “beingly beings,” rather than simply *onta*, “beings”); said otherwise, x is ontologically prior to y if x is more immediately related to the ultimate source and cause of all (the Good). In Plato, ontological priority usually shows up in an asymmetrical dependence relationship: x is ontologically prior to y because y depends on x for its being (or for its being a certain sort), whereas x does not depend on y.

simply follow the court of public opinion, seeking not to understand but to obey. The charioteer does not contribute its own power to the soul's motivity but only directs its motion. Rather, its own power is put to work elsewhere, namely, in taking in the superheavenly beings (understandingly, "festively") which it sees while following in the divine train if it should manage to impose order on the motive forces. While both horses do pursue the good of the soul under certain limited aspects, it is only the charioteer who can receive the good as such.

11. Reason is that power in the soul which, like the eye, can allow itself to "take in" what is there to be "seen." As the eye actively receives the beauty of that which is to be seen by attentively focusing on the visible object, so reason actively receives the intelligible by attentively focusing on what's there to be known (form). The exercise of the active, "moving" power of reason (*dianoia*, the discursive capacity to think things through, infer consequences, etc.) is always posterior to the exercise of reason's receptive power (*nous*, the intuitive capacity to apprehend forms, wholes, and principles), for we cannot reason except from within a prior (however partial, however inadequate, however unrealized) reception of the way things stand (even though our "moving" reason can help us recognize the inadequacy of our prior reception, thus opening the door for a new, more adequate reception). Mobile reason's work largely consists of clearing away whatever stands in the way of a more adequate reception (e.g., by refuting false opinion), so that receptive reason can be more fully itself, unhindered.

12. The adequacy of reason's reception of the intelligible is directly related to the attentiveness with which reason looks to the thing to be "seen." Reason must focus its attention on the reality itself in order to receive it to the extent possible according to its capacity; reason can only be attentive adequately when it has tamed the soul's other powers so

that the whole soul can be pointed in the same direction.¹²² Just as the eye cannot see what is to be seen without receiving the prior activity of light (its illuminating ray), so reason cannot take in what is to be known without the prior activity of the principle of intelligibility (the Good, by means of its illuminating *idea*, per the *Republic's* Analogy of the Sun; cf. *Phaedo* 97e-98b).¹²³ Only by having seen the superheavenly beings can we come to true knowledge, “knowledge of the Being which really is (*on ontōs*)” (247e) as opposed to “the knowledge where Becoming resides” and “the knowledge which changes from object to object regarding things which down here we call Being” (247d; cf. *Republic* 504c). To come to such a knowledge, we had to follow the gods to the superheavenly place, and, once there, we had to be led around (*periagei*) by the revolving motion (*periphora*), so that we could “gaze (*theōrousi*) on the things outside the heavens” (247c). As we discussed previously, following the gods to the superheavenly periphery is only possible when the whole soul is unified and directed toward that which is to be seen, upon which reason will “feast.” The metaphors of sight and nourishment in the Palinode’s depiction of the soul’s entry into knowledge of the forms both highlight a receptive comportment to the thing to be known.¹²⁴

¹²² In addition to the remarks about reason’s role in harmonizing the soul in Chapter 2 and those about love’s role in helping reason to do so in §3 above, consider *Republic* 518b-d: “But the present argument, on the other hand, indicates that this power is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns—just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body—must be turned around from that which is coming into being together with the whole soul until it is able to endure looking at that which is and the brightest part of that which is. And we affirm that this is the good, don’t we?” Reason cannot attend to the intelligible without the whole soul being reoriented toward the intelligible. Likewise, we might take the *Phaedo's* language of purification (*katharsis*) as just such a way of unifying the whole soul’s directionality toward the things to be known. See Jones and Marechal, “Plato’s Guide to Living with Your Body.”

¹²³ Cf. Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 88: “The discursive speech that always occurs along with our non-discursive experiences will never *replace* that experience, but it nevertheless will occur—and I am forced to use a metaphor here—in the light of that non-discursive experience.” See also Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence*, 182.

¹²⁴ One might object here that taking vision as a metaphorical depiction of knowledge’s receptive comportment to the thing to be known is inaccurate given Plato’s understanding of vision (and perhaps anachronistic to boot), for Plato is generally taken to have held an “extramissive” theory of vision,

13. Reason's essentially receptive relationship to its object (the reality to be known) implies a certain basic heteronomy governing reason's activities (as we briefly discussed in Chapter 2).¹²⁵ When reason attentively looks to the thing to be seen, it privileges the mode of disclosure native to the thing itself, like a dancer allowing the partner to lead the movement. Reason, in trying to understand the thing to be known, receives the metric for adequately understanding the thing to be known from the thing itself; the metric for adequately understanding the thing to be known does *not* come from the knower. The *Palinode* depicts reason as being only obscurely and confusedly able to apprehend its object in our everydayness; only when we are struck by reminders and re-elevated to the thing itself do we see the forms for what they are. Form can be apprehended in its instances, but form can only be *adequately* apprehended when reason is elevated to see it "itself by itself."

14. The key to understanding Plato's point is in how Plato resolves a tension between two classical epistemological axioms: whatever is received is received according to the mode of the recipient, and truth is the adequation of things and the intellect.¹²⁶ When Beauty is first

wherein sight is accomplished by the eye's emission of a "ray" or "beam" toward the thing to be seen (see, e.g., *Timaeus* 45b, 46b, *Theaetetus* 156aff.). But there is, in fact, no incompatibility between an extramissive theory of vision (or an intentional, ecstatic understanding of consciousness generally, to which Plato holds) and a receptive understanding of vision (or of reasoning). The "going-out" aspect of seeing or reasoning meets the object in order to receive the qualities of the object, as Socrates makes clear by saying the soul receives the "in-flowing of beauty through the eyes" (251b). On this point, see Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 99-100; cf. McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 199ff.

¹²⁵ That reason's receptivity implies a certain heteronomy in the proper work of reason is, perhaps, a necessary implication of being committed to both metaphysical realism (as nearly all Plato scholars take Plato to be, regardless of significant divergences in their articulations thereof) and to the intelligibility of being (cf. *Republic* 477a). If things have genuine, real natures irreducible to what one happens to think about them, then understanding the thing requires understanding its nature, on that nature's own terms. By contrast, a nominalist, for whom there are no natures, need not take reason to be receptive to (and thereby ruled by) an order irreducible to its work. Rather, the task of the intellect will be exhausted by discursive reason's work of conceptually ordering the raw data of experience.

¹²⁶ The standard formulation for both axioms is given by Aquinas, though each comes to Aquinas by way of Neoplatonic philosophy from late antiquity. I'm not claiming here that Plato himself formulated either of them but only that the epistemological point being formulated here can be helpfully excavated by situating Plato amidst claims that come out of his philosophy, at least according to his later followers. For

experienced by the lover, it is received confusedly by a being who is “at a loss to understand it” (251d). The lover’s soul experiences seemingly contradictory affects, both great pain and great relief (251b-d) on account of beauty’s “in-flow.” In his confused reception of Beauty, the lover is driven to do outlandish things, as we discussed above (cf. 251e-252b). Beauty is received visually through its radiant images because that is the only mode through which the lover can initially receive it (cf. 250d), not yet having been transported back to the superheavenly place in memory (cf. 250e). But, as we argued above, the very process of receiving Beauty through the beloved’s mediation transforms the lover so as to be apt to receive Beauty *as* Beauty, rather than as a radiant image thereof. The inadequate, perceptual reception of Beauty prepares the soul for an adequate, intellectual reception of Beauty—a genuine communion with Beauty—by reminding the receiver that the image is, in fact, an *image* (however radiant and lovely) of the reality to be “seen,” not the reality itself (cf. 254b).¹²⁷ Through the experience of Beauty in the beloved’s beauty, the lover is *adequated* to the reception of Beauty itself (coming to remember having seen it, as the Palinode says, “on a holy pedestal alongside moderation”). Once the lover has been adequated to Beauty, the lover can appreciate the beautiful beloved as an iconic image of Beauty’s radiance. Hence the lover’s relationship to the beloved is transformed from being one in which the beloved is used as a mere means to recollection of Beauty (a “ladder” to be kicked away; cf. 252a) to one in which the beloved is celebrated as a bearer of Beauty’s visage, leading the beloved to genuinely serve the beloved as genuinely value-laden being (cf. 253a, 255a), who deserves to be treated as such.

reception according to the mode of the recipient, cf. *Summa Theologiae* Ia. Q. 84, art. 1, resp.: *receptum est in recipiente per modum recipientis*. For truth being the adequation of thing and intellect, cf. *Summa Theologiae* Ia. Q. 16, art. 2, resp.: *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*.

¹²⁷ This is also the first and perhaps most crucial step of the prisoner’s ascent from the cave. By turning around after being freed from bondage, the prisoner is able to recognize shadows *as* shadows for the first time by recognizing that shadows are dependent on the puppets which cast them.

By coming to an adequate reception of Beauty, the lover can now live a life in which his comportment to the various beauties bears witness to his fidelity to Beauty itself. Beauty itself cannot be completely loved without also loving the various beauties in which it presents itself (as we discussed in §4).

15. This episode demonstrates a more general point of the *Phaedrus's* epistemology. While it is true that we've always already received all that is to be known (as the recollection thesis requires), we can only actively take up that reception by way of passing from an inadequate reception (mediated by sensible images) to an adequate reception (the intellect's reception of form, "itself by itself"). Through sensible reminders, we receive that which is to be known according to our capacity, inadequately. The forms are present as a whole in the sensible reminders, even if they are not wholly present in those sensible reminders (since that would compromise their transcendence of, irreducibility to, and capacity to be present to, the many instances). While we might be inclined to take sensible reminders as the realities themselves rather than as images thereof (especially on account of an upbringing insufficiently directed toward truth), we can be led from these sensible reminders to the realities imaged, precisely because the forms are present in them.¹²⁸ An inadequate reception is still a reception; we just require some redirection and breaking of habits in order to recognize that we've already received all that we need to receive to understand what is there to be understood.¹²⁹ This redirection or breaking of habits can take place under the guidance of another in whom the reception of what is there to be received is (more) adequate; this is maximally true under the guidance of the gods, in whom the reception of what is there to be received is perfect. By

¹²⁸ On this point, see Perl, *Theophany*, ch. 6.

¹²⁹ Centuries later, Plotinus will make a similar point by means of analogizing our souls to beautiful statues encased in marble that just needs to be chipped away so that we can shine forth as the beautiful statues we always already were.

redirecting us, breaking bad habits, eliminating stumbling blocks, etc., our guides help to *adequate* us to the measure of the thing to be known; what is to be known never ceases to be received according to the mode of the recipient, but, under suitable guidance, the recipient's mode can be *elevated* so as to become capable of receiving intelligibility according to the measure of the thing to be known (as Diotima indicates in her discussion of the "Ladder of Love").¹³⁰ It may be that the human recipient's mode will never have the perfection to be found in the gods our guides (though, as we argued in Chapter 3, the distinction between divine reception and human reception is in the perfection of the agent's unwavering *orientation* to the thing to be received, not in the capacity to receive what is to be received), but, as Socrates reminds us, "yet even in reaching for the beautiful there is beauty, and also in suffering whatever it is that one suffers en route" (274a-b).

16. We will go on to speak of the various forms under which mediation and guidance can help us better receive what has always already been given, so that we can be elevated by the reception into a greater, more adequate reception, leading ultimately to a genuine communion with the thing to be known. But before doing so, we must note that, in the *Phaedrus*, at least, this process of adequation and the reception of the thing to be known can't happen without the work of the divine (or, perhaps, of really real reality, by proximity to which the divine is divine). Sweeney puts the point well while speaking of the gift the Cicadas have been tasked with giving to those who honor the gods (259b):

The gift is the giving of wisdom, but its effect is determined by how we receive it. The key to receiving it rightly is *knowing that wisdom is received from the divine*. The danger is not just in failing to continue but in thinking that wisdom is the accomplishment of the philosopher by himself. This would entail treating philosophy just as hard labor in which we deny receptivity and so suffer from what Josef Pieper calls the "hard quality of *not-being-able-to-receive*; a stoniness of heart" that will only accept what it can

¹³⁰ Cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 129. Ficino analogizes the distinction between a recipient having received according to her natural capacity and a recipient having received in a way proportionate to the giver's generosity to the distinction between a feast and a banquet (cf. *Commentary*, Ch. 20).

apprehend on its own. We need a receptivity that knows wisdom is received as a gift, which requires that we remain open to the gods.¹³¹

Why can't even philosophers accomplish wisdom by their own unaided efforts? As we indicated above, the answer, negatively put, is in the essentiality of human indigence.¹³² We, like Diotima's daimonic Eros, are fundamentally "metaxological" creatures, characterized by an abiding betweenness. We are not one of the true beings (*ta ontōs onta*) in the superheavenly place (even if there is a sense in which the superheavenly place is our true hearth and home), but neither are we entirely cut off from the "blessed vistas" (247a) wherein the gods dance. Like Eros, we are the children of resource and poverty. We don't have what we want,¹³³ but we have the resources to go after it. We can never grasp what we want so securely that we exhaust it, but we can, like the gods, remain steadfast in our commitment to it. In our resourcefulness we ecstatically pursue that which we desire, but on account of our poverty, we can only do so successfully with divine aid, a divine aid that is always already available because of the essential generosity and non-envy of the gods (and because of reality's radiance, which the gods generously mediate for us).

§5.3. Interpersonal Mediation: Plato's "Anti-Occasionalism"

17. While, as we just claimed, reception of the prior activity of the divine (or of the true beings by proximity to which the divine is divine) is requisite for an *adequate* understanding

¹³¹ Sweeney, "Pedagogical Settings," 102. We will briefly return to Pieper's point about taking the intellect to be primarily receptive or primarily active in the next chapter.

¹³² As we'll go on to see in Ch. 6, the negative formulation (human indigence) is, to some extent, inadequate and preliminary, for the problem is not *simply* in human inadequacy (as the "tragedians of reason" claim). Rather than having limits thrust upon us by the weakness of our nature, the inadequacy of our capacities is determined instead by the inexhaustible plenitude of "really real reality," in comparison to which even the perfectly ordered gods are not completely adequate, for even they need to be led-around the superheavenly periphery, as we discussed in Chapter 3. Cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 132.

¹³³ See Kosman's helpful comments on what exactly Diotima means by saying that love is defined by what we lack (*endeēs*) in "Platonic Love," 34.

of that which is to be known, this does not mean that each act of adequate understanding is occasioned by a direct divine inspiration. The philosopher, as Sweeney claimed, cannot come to know the forms by himself through his own motive power, for coming to know the forms requires being receptive to their radiant activity (as we'll go on to discuss at greater length in Chapter 6). While the forms are, in some sense, always already known by all, they are only ever adequately known (insofar as that is possible for us) when we know them "on their own terms" (as absolutes, as "themselves by themselves," rather than as relatives, as instances). As we claimed, we cannot adequate ourselves to a knowledge of the forms purely by our own activity, and so we need to be open to whatever "help" is available. The forms themselves "help" us by presenting themselves to us in ways which are accessible to us in our everydayness through their images. The gods help mediate our reception of that help by being perfect exemplars (they are perfectly just, even if they are not justice itself; in other words, they are perfect *images* of justice). But, crucially, divine mediation can itself be mediated (just as, for example, the auditors of a play partake of the poet's divine inspiration, and do so perhaps through the mediation of the rhapsode's art), and our reception of truth through multiple layers of mediation is, perhaps, the ordinary mode for us, especially for those of us who have been "corrupted" or who haven't been "recently initiated." We see truth mediated in Socrates's relation to the poets Sappho, Anacreon, Ibycus, and especially Stesichorus, by remembrance of whom Socrates comes to a greater recognition of the nature of love (as we'll discuss in Chapter 5). Likewise, we see the Palinode's beloved partake of the lover's divine inspiration. We later see that the artful writer's writings can serve as reminders by which "all who walk down the same path" can be nourished and "grow" (276d-277a). But, as the example of Lysias, at least, makes clear, not all human togetherness is suitable for mediating our reception of truth. As Lebeck notes, the *Phaedrus's* two great modes of soul-leading, *erōs* and *logos*, can each

“lead the soul to ultimate harm or good.”¹³⁴ By what criterion, then, could we distinguish soul-leading as beguilement from soul-leading as mediating one’s reception of truth?

18. There are a number of criteria which suggest themselves as helpful for distinguishing soul-leading as beguilement from soul-leading as a wholesome practice by which the leader mediates the follower’s reception of the truth by which both are nourished. Most obviously, the two practices would have different ends: beguilement aims to lead the follower away from truth (cf. 262a-b), whereas true soul-leading aims to lead the follower to truth, just as the gods lead us to the sight of the true beings. Likewise, the two would have different motivations: beguilement aims at some apparent benefit to the leader, whereas the true art of soul-leading, like all true arts, aims primarily at benefiting the follower upon whom the soul-leader works. Both of these criteria help to distinguish divinely-mad love from humanly-sick love. As we argued above, the divinely-mad lover mediates the beloved’s memorial contact with Beauty itself and the god whom they jointly follow, and the divinely-mad lover acts toward the beloved in the way in which he acts for the sake of the beloved’s good (“genuine service”), so that the beloved will develop the customs and habits of the god they followed. By contrast, the humanly-sick lover preys on the beloved for the sake of his own pleasure, and to secure the beloved as a source from whom the lover can continually extract pleasure, the lover intentionally weakens the beloved, preventing him from taking up “divine philosophy” (239b). Likewise, the true rhetorician will assess the auditor’s soul-type so that she can, caringly, tailor her language so as better to lead the auditor to truth, for the auditor’s own sake. By contrast, the artless rhetorician attempts to persuade the auditor to whatever opinion is convenient for her own goals (whether it’s money, power, influence, etc.), willingly and

¹³⁴ Lebeck, “The Central Myth,” 268.

knowingly leading the auditor away from truth and what would be beneficial for the auditor (except insofar as the true and the beneficial happens to serve the rhetorician's end).¹³⁵

19. Our discussion of the role of mediation in the *Phaedrus*, however, offers a third criterion for distinguishing beguilement from true soul-leading that is perhaps more revealing than the aforementioned criteria: by what power does the leader lead the follower? In beguilement, the leader leads the follower by means of his own capacity to make things move according to his whim. Suitably, the beguiling leader is one in whom reason, the charioteer, is *enslaved* to the soul's motive forces, the soul's horses, which, when unrestrained by reason, seek apparent goods like pleasure, domination, riches, public acclaim, high offices, and other reality-resistant goods (see Chapter 2). This is a soul that is non-receptively on the move, and when its movement toward its desired end requires the presence of another, such a soul applies its motive force to move that other into a suitable position for its own aims. By contrast, in true soul-leading, the leader leads the follower by mediating the follower's relationship with something whose activity, to which the leader is receptive, is prior to the leader's own activity. Hence the divinely-manic lover mediates the beloved's relationship with the god they followed by introducing the same customs and habits into the beloved's character which the lover himself had acquired by following in the god's example. Likewise, the lover awakens return-love in the beloved by reflecting the beloved's beauty, by which the lover remembered Beauty

¹³⁵ The artless rhetorician is afflicted by what Schindler has called "a more advanced stage of the experience" of misology, wherein the resentment toward reason diagnosed by Plato in the *Phaedo* (89d) "has cooled to the point of fading altogether from felt significance, so that one is no longer troubled by reason one way or the other. Misology, as we characterize it, appears most perfectly not in the person who rejects reason altogether, but in the person who accepts it ... most of the time. [...] As people often say, the real opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference; the real opposite of the philologue is the misologist who has simply grown numb to the claims of reason. If a refusal to make any claim about the way things are is indeed more a concession to reason than a rejection of it, then the misologist is best characterized as one who does not allow reason to make any lasting claim on him, even if he, for his part, makes whatever claim on reason he needs to make given the circumstances" (*Plato's Critique*, 11-12).

itself, so that the beloved can himself remember Beauty itself. The Palinode depicts this point especially by means of its “rheumatic” (or “flowing”) imagery: just as Beauty flows into the lover’s eyes when he beholds the beloved, so does that Beauty overflow out of the reformed lover into the beloved’s eyes. The lover *extends* Beauty’s influence, as well as the god’s influence, on himself to the beloved, who receives indirectly by means of the lover’s mediation what the lover had first received. By passing on what he had received, the lover cooperates in Beauty’s activity.

20. The true soul-leader, then, is one who leads the follower by being led herself. Her activity does not introduce a change in the follower (*pace* the Protagorean claim at *Theaetetus* 166d-167d), but instead cooperatively extends the activity of something adequate to redirect and nourish the follower.¹³⁶ The true soul-leader’s activity is always conditioned by a prior recognition of a reality irreducible to her; this prior reality makes a claim on the soul-leader, and the soul-leader responds to this claim by displacing herself as the center of her concerns. By displacing herself as the center of her concern in her centralization of the reality to which she responds, she thereby can become a mediating center between her follower and the reality to which the soul-leader will lead the follower, just as a window can mediate one’s vision of what’s beyond the window only by being invisible, by not standing in the way of one’s gaze.¹³⁷ To say, for example, that the soul-leader has persuaded or instructed the follower is to speak

¹³⁶ Cf. McCoy, *Plato on Rhetoric*, 191: the forms have an almost gravitational pull on the soul; the forms are, at the end of the day, the “real rhetoricians.” They alone have the power to move the soul. Correlatively, “one can be guided to the truth, but one must see it for oneself” (Gordon, *Plato’s Erotic World*, 216). Interpersonal interactions can only ever mediate one’s relationship to the forms; the forms themselves are ultimately what draw us to themselves, and our *erōs* is not fulfilled until it comes to the forms (through however much mediation).

¹³⁷ See Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, ch. 4 for the essential “invisibility” of the philosopher. The philosopher is invisible to the extent that she is rightly ordered to the forms, which are themselves invisible (cf. 247c). In loving, we become like unto the thing loved, and so the philosopher who loves the forms becomes invisible and radiant like the beloved forms (cf. *Sophist* 253e-254b).

incompletely (though not exactly wrongly). Rather, it is truth that persuades the follower (cf. 260e), a truth that has been received by the soul-leader and passed on to the follower, a truth that has been “filtered through” the intelligence of the soul-leader so as to be most suitable for the follower. This “filtering through” has a “prismatic” character (an image to which we’ll return in Chapter 6), since the artful soul-leader, knowing that different followers need to be led differently on account of their different conditions, can make the one truth appear many (as different propositional “images”), so that “the thought of every soul [may be] nourished by what is appropriate for her to receive” (247d); herein lies the positive contribution of the soul-leader’s activity. The fact that the lover *co*-operates in Beauty’s activity and that the soul-leader *co*-operates in reality’s radiant self-manifestation by extending its influence while adding in her own variation into Beauty’s prismatic radiation constitutes Plato’s “anti-occasionalism.”¹³⁸ In becoming a prismatic filter, which allows the one truth to radiate into many forms suitable for the many different souls, the soul-leader has herself taken on reality’s

¹³⁸ “Occasionalism” refers to that position in metaphysics (frequently associated with medieval Islamic theologians like al-Ghazali and modern Cartesians like Malebranche) which rejects natural causation in favor of an explanation wherein God directly causes all beings and events; natural beings act only as the *occasions* for God’s causal activity. To suggest that Plato is an (epistemological) occasionalist in the current context would be to suggest that human beings (and other beings of experience) can have no positive causal role in contributing to one’s recognition of the forms. It’s widely agreed that, for Plato, we can play a negative role in each other’s understanding (by clearing away barriers, showing the falsity of opinion, etc.), but many commentators restrict the role that we can play with respect to each other to that negative role (regardless of whether they lean toward a more skeptical or more dogmatic understanding of Plato’s epistemology). What I’m suggesting is that, while Plato tends to emphasize the negative role (for good reason, based on his understanding of truth and knowledge), there is a place for a positive role (what we could call “instruction,” as per 278a), but that positive role of human causation in each other’s understanding is always co-operative rather than unilaterally operative. We can *actively* mediate another’s active reception of truth’s self-presentation by tailoring our presentation of our own understanding of things for our auditors according to their soul-type and condition (cf. 277b-c), but when we do so, we act as co-causes, not sufficient causes, just as the farmer who plants seeds (cf. 277a) acts as a co-cause, not a sufficient cause (for the farmer relies on the seed’s natural impetus). Plato elsewhere distinguishes between cause (*aition*) and co-cause (*sunaition*); cf. *Statesman* 281d-e; *Timaeus*, 46c-d.

radiant, prismatic character (as we'll discuss in Chapter 6). By contrast, the beguiling soul-leader becomes less like reality's radiant character by pursuing reality-resistant goods.

21. Though using "soul-leading" to describe the philosopher's role as a mediator of one's contact with the true beings, rather than as an injector of doctrines or knowledge, is unique to the *Phaedrus*, the claim is developed in a number of ways throughout the corpus. Most famously, Socrates claims not to be a teacher (*Apology* 19d, 33b; *Meno* 81e-82a), especially if by "teacher" we mean someone who transmits some discrete intellectual contents to a student. Elsewhere, Socrates seems to indicate that the direct transmission of intellectual contents is impossible (see *Symposium* 175c-e), at least for the highest things. As we'll go on to discuss (especially in Chapter 6), one of the most important reasons for the impossibility of a direct transmission of intellectual contents from one who knows to one who is ignorant is because knowledge is, in Plato at least, irreducible to any intellectual contents, for knowledge *is* the communion of the soul with Being. Knowledge occurs in the being-together-with of soul and thing, not simply in the soul's internal acts. Such a communion can only occur, as we'll see, from within a way of life, a way of life by which the knower is adequated for communion. Hence, even if we were to suppose that intellectual contents could be transmitted and could exhaust the act of knowing, such a transmission could only be adequately received by someone who lives suitably (cf. VII.344a, *Theaetetus* 194c-195a; though, in line with the argument of §3 above, it is not impossible that an inadequate reception of what must be known could start working on the soul so as to make it receptive).¹³⁹ But, as Socrates claims, the true art of education is *not* the transmission (*entithenai*) of intellectual contents nor the restoration of a broken faculty (as if putting sight into blind eyes), but is instead the leading-around

¹³⁹ Cf. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 26, 33, 65, 70.

(*periakteson*) of the whole soul so that that instrument by which the soul “sees” reality is directed toward what’s best and brightest (*Republic* 518b-d).

22. For Plato, a philosopher cannot transmit knowledge to a student (at least, not knowledge of the true beings). As we’ll discuss in Chapter 6, the intransmissibility of knowledge is the primary reason for the criticism of writing in the *Phaedrus* (as well as in the *Seventh Letter*), for knowledge is not exhausted by or reducible to any propositional formulation thereof. Though the philosopher cannot transmit knowledge, she can mediate the student’s recovery of what she always already has. The philosopher can do this in a number of ways: by exposing the inadequacy of or contradictions within false opinions, by refutation, by acting as a “midwife” who helps deliver and examine the “pregnant” soul’s thoughts, by rhetorical speeches designed to redirect the auditor’s soul so that it might “look” in the right place, by the dialectical give and take of conversation, and, above all, by providing an exemplar to follow, just as Socrates follows after the dialectician, “as if he were a god” (266b).¹⁴⁰ The success of any and all of these endeavors hinges both on the philosopher’s pursuit of truth and on the interlocutor’s willingness to co-pursue.¹⁴¹ But neither interlocutor can accomplish the pursuit of truth without a prior receptive openness to the truth itself. We must follow reason wherever it leads, but reason itself leads by being led by that which reason seeks. An

¹⁴⁰ See Schindler, *Freedom From Reality*, 304: “What is the proper inference from all this regarding Socrates’s position [at the end of the *Protagoras*]? If virtue and knowledge are one and the same, and virtue cannot be taught, it follows that knowledge cannot be taught. Why can’t knowledge be taught? Because it is not the same as information, which can be commodified and peddled on the market, a set of items or ‘techniques’ that can be inserted into the soul without any particular preparation, as the sophists thought. Instead, for Plato, knowledge is the result of a formation in goodness; it is the fruit of a relationship between the soul and reality, an elevation of the soul into the actuality of the order of things. This relationship cannot be produced by a professional teacher, but instead can only be *mediated*, as by a *midwife*. Knowledge, in other words, is a relationship that must be lived, as the order of the soul to, in, and from the good, a relationship that one must *enter into*, or be brought into.”

¹⁴¹ On this point, see Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 80-81, 253-255 and “Why Socrates Doesn’t Charge,” 410. Muir notes that a central premise of Socratic education is the recognition of one’s self-insufficiency (see “Friendship in Education,” 237).

unled reason can be clever, but it cannot come to truth. The philosophical comportment is one of abiding openness—not of an open-endedness borne of a conviction that genuine conviction is impossible (the skeptic’s open-endedness), but instead an openness to ever greater understanding of what one has already come to know, from wherever that greater understanding comes,¹⁴² even if it comes from “trees and country places” (230d), as we’ll discuss in the next chapter.

¹⁴² Cf. Tafolla, “Philosophical Eroticism,” 14, for some criticisms of the “open-ended” reading of Socratic practice. Likewise, see Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 277-282.

Ch. 5: The Metaphysical Orientation of Love 2: Love in the Drama

“Let us act (prattōmen) in this way, Crito, since the god leads (huphegeitai) us in this way.”
Crito 54e¹

§1. Preliminary Considerations

1. In the last few decades, Platonic scholarship has increasingly focused on the dramatic aspects of Plato’s dialogues—the characterization of the interlocutors; the setting, topography, and temporality; the action and events that take place; etc.—as relevant to the dialogues’ philosophical content. If, as I think, such scholarship is correct to think that the dramatic features of a dialogue provide the key to its interpretation (or, at least, serve as essential signposts for the dialogue’s interpretation), then we should expect that the *Phaedrus*’s dramatic features shed light on the dialogue’s interpretation in a crucial way.

2. Here, we seek to ask whether the *Phaedrus*’s dramatic features harmonize with our interpretation of the Palinode’s presentation of love’s formative effects on both lover and beloved as discussed in the previous chapter. I will argue that they do, though the success of my argument hinges on the acceptance of a few interpretive conclusions about the characterization of Phaedrus, Socrates, and their relationship—conclusions which are not universally accepted. There are, perhaps, three key interpretive questions that need to be considered when determining whether the drama of the dialogue bears witness to the Palinode’s depiction of love. After a brief discussion of possible ways of addressing these questions, I’ll turn to a more direct treatment of the dialogue’s drama.

3. First, we should ask whether there is any meaningful way in which Socrates and Phaedrus can be said to be “in love,” for if they are not “in love” in any meaningful sense,

¹ Trans. G. M. A. Grube, *Five Dialogues*.

then the Palinode's depiction of love may be irrelevant to interpreting the dramatic portrayal of their relationship. The same could be said for the other relationships discussed in the dialogue, namely, Phaedrus's relationship with Lysias and Socrates's relationship with Isocrates. If Moss is correct in saying that "Socrates and Phaedrus are not literally in love, and neither are they literally seducing one another,"² then we shouldn't expect their relationship, as presented dramatically in the dialogue, to confirm the Palinode's description (except, perhaps, incidentally).

4. But as we've begun to argue in Chapter 4 and will continue to argue in Chapter 6, Moss's restriction of love to interpersonal "erotic" love (in the contemporary sense of "erotic" as opposed to the Platonic sense which we are trying to uncover) is unwarranted. If, instead, Ferrari is right to suggest that "Genuine love has a different goal: neither friendship as such, nor (still less) sexual gratification, but [...] the common good of the lovers," then there is no reason to suggest that Socrates and Phaedrus do not share in, or, at least, come to share in, this common-good-seeking love.³ A relationship wherein each party is concerned with their

² Moss, "Soul-Leading, Again," 7. While Moss's reading of the love-play as a metaphor which helps bring into focus different species of love of *logos* is useful, I see no reason why the metaphorical reading and the direct reading need be at odds. By contrast, Sallis (*Being and Logos*, 112) takes Socrates to be a genuine lover of Phaedrus, and Asmis ("Psychagogia, 163") is happy to identify Phaedrus with the boy who is the addressee of both of Socrates's speeches.

³ Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 94. Likewise, Belfiore suggests that Plato's educational-erotic relationships require only "the good will and affection that make dialectic possible" (*Socrates' Daimonic Art*, 12); interpersonal romantic love is supererogatory (contrary to Altman, for whom the Palinode is designed "to persuade the boy to have sex with the speaker"; *The Guardians in Action*, 176; cf. 177-178). See also *Listening to the Cicadas*, 160: "To fall in love with someone (or to sense the possibility of falling, as in the first encounter with the beautiful boy) is to allow (or contemplate allowing) that person to become an essential and dominant part of your life—only to lay yourself open then to such questions as: why *this* person?" (see also Sheffield, "Beyond *Eros*," 260-261 and Whiting, "Love," 421). By this metric, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Socrates and Phaedrus have *erōs* for each other such that each lays a strong claim on the other. The historical context would suggest that Phaedrus turned away from Socrates, but Phaedrus's turning away need not imply the non-reality of a genuine, if incipient, love. For Ferrari, Sheffield, and Whiting, to love another is to be awed by the other's nature (especially, the other's beauty and goodness) and to want to bear witness to and further promote the value of that nature.

joint good—inclusive of each party’s fulfilment—is precisely what we see in the description of the best couple near the end of the *Palinode* (as distinguished from the second-best pair, who fail to make love of wisdom their primary concern; cf. 255e-256e). And, as we’ll note below, Socrates and Phaedrus refer to each other with specifically erotic language, indicating that each relates to the other as a source of his ecstatic yearning.⁴ Accordingly, given Plato’s well-noted practice of imbuing the drama of a given dialogue with that dialogue’s major philosophical concerns, we should expect to see something akin to the *Palinode*’s lovers’ relationship in the drama (as we’ll see below).

5. Here, we’ll interpret the drama under the supposition that the ascriptions of love are irreducible to some kind of playacting. Note that by saying that the ascriptions of love are irreducible to some kind of playacting, I don’t mean to imply that Socrates and Phaedrus are *not* playacting (they are), nor by extension that Phaedrus and Lysias are actually in a pederastic relationship (they presumably are not), but only to say that the dialogue presents them as such in order to transform both the playacting and the pederastic relationship being imitated into a genuine form of love, one which can adequately lay claim to being described using *both* *erōs* and *philia*. In other words, pederastic play *becomes* genuine interpersonal love under Love’s guidance; in doing so, each party comes to affirm, ecstatically, the goodness and beauty of the other in the other’s abiding difference as a consequence of and reflection of their mutual commitment to Goodness and Beauty.⁵

⁴ As Osborne notes, Socrates and Phaedrus each alternately play the roles of seducer and seduced; see “Seduction of the Word,” 266.

⁵ Cf. Whiting, “Love,” 421: “an important component of love—perhaps even its primary criterion—is the extent to which the lover is willing to be displaced from his ordinary condition by his appreciation of the independent and autonomous values of the beloved.”

6. Second, we should ask whether we can reasonably conclude that Phaedrus has been converted, per Socrates's prayer (257a-b), to Love, philosophy, and wisdom-loving speeches by the end of their sojourn along the Ilissos. Supposing we can establish that there is some kind of genuine love between Socrates and Phaedrus, if we also find that Phaedrus goes back to Athens in no better state than when he had left, then Plato's dramatic portrayal of Socrates's time with Phaedrus would *undermine* the Palinode's depiction of love's formative effects. Zuckert, for example, concludes her treatment of the *Phaedrus* in *Plato's Philosophers* by interpreting Socrates's final remark ("Let's go;" 279c) as an indication that Socrates "recognizes that he and Phaedrus do not share or have the most important thing in common, a desire for wisdom or truth. They are not truly lovers or friends; in this conversation they had simply playacted."⁶

7. A negative characterization of Phaedrus is certainly warranted to some extent. He's dilettantish to be sure (Ferrari aptly describes him as an "impresario" who likes talk for the sake of talk). He doesn't seem to be well-suited to philosophy on account of his incuriousness and deficient memory. He appears to be overly concerned with health and comfort, and he is, arguably, lazy. As we'll discuss below, he seems to be inclined toward an unwholesome utilitarian-consumerist worldview.⁷ Perhaps the most damning aspect of Plato's dramatization

⁶ Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 331; see also 321; cf. Lavilla de Lera, "Prayer to Pan," 71. See Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 117-118, for a similar assessment of Phaedrus's failure to be moved to philosophy; Hyland also suggests that the *Phaedrus* may be an implicit critique of Socrates himself on account of his *failure* to love (see 132-135).

⁷ On Phaedrus's dilettantish quality and lack of philosophically-conducive qualities, see Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 67-68, as well as Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, Ch. 1; Griswold concurs (*Self-Knowledge*, 25); on Phaedrus's hypertrophic concern for comfort, see Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 10; on Phaedrus's putative laziness and consumerism, see Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 325.

of Phaedrus is the fact that he is, as Hyland notes, “stunningly—one might say appallingly—unmoved by its content.”⁸

8. The real question, however, is not whether Phaedrus has problematic *tendencies* but instead whether Phaedrus’s interaction with Socrates at the grove has curbed or replaced those tendencies. Rather than see the dialogue’s final exchange as Socrates’s tired admission that Phaedrus is thoroughly a dolt, one could also see it as Phaedrus’s genuine yearning to want *as Socrates wants*, to be friends with Socrates, and to have with Socrates all things in common (279c), including a common mission to share with their respective beloveds what they’ve learned under the guidance of the gods of the grove (279b).⁹ Whereas the pair had certainly begun their journey in exaggerated playacting (evidenced by the repeated use of *proagein*, to lead on, in the prologue), they depart together, as friends, under the aegis of a common prayer.¹⁰ If Chapter 4’s argument about the formative effects of love is on the right track, and if there is any meaningful way in which we can say that Socrates and Phaedrus are in a love-relationship, then the more positive reading of the dialogue’s apostolic sendoff is warranted.

9. Third, we should ask whether and to what extent we can take the content of the Palinode as a positive “teaching,” seriously upheld by Socrates.¹¹ If Socrates doesn’t mean what he says in the Palinode, or if he only seriously means some aspects and not others, or if

⁸ Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 115.

⁹ On this, see D. White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 273-275.

¹⁰ Accordingly, my reading of Phaedrus’s character is more consistent with those who emphasize his virtues and growth, such as D. White (*Rhetoric and Reality*), Nussbaum (*Fragility*), Ferrari (*Listening to the Cicadas*), Schenker (“The Strangeness of the *Phaedrus*,” 84) and Gottfried (“Pan, the Cicadas, and Plato’s Use of Myth in the *Phaedrus*,” *Plato’s Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations*, ed. Gerald Press [Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1993]).

¹¹ Lavilla de Lera, for example, asserts that “Socrates’ traditional mood in this work, his overly emphatic remarks on the landscape, his presentation of philosophy as a kind of initiation, and his eulogy of different forms of divine mania and inspiration, are not serious at all (*pace* Gaiser 1990, 69-70, 80-81), but form part of Socrates’ didactic attempt to change the attitude of the modern and sophisticated Phaedrus, who is incapable of thinking for himself” (“The Prayer to Pan,” 70).

does mean what he says but later comes to recognize, before leaving the grove, that there were falsities in his speech, then we would have no reason to expect that the dramatic portrayal of the love-relationship between Phaedrus and Socrates would conform to the Palinode's account to the extent that the Palinode's account is false, except insofar as the drama might itself reflect the falsity of the Palinode's claims. Griswold suggests that the myth "self-qualifies" itself, even partially "recants" itself, to the extent that Socrates's mythic depiction of the superheavenly things defies the myth's own standard of what a human being can know. If this charge, or one akin to it,¹² is true (for Griswold's contention does not seem to be about the Palinode's account of love), then we would have to be wary of seeking a dramatic confirmation of the Palinode's content.¹³

¹² See, e.g., Altman, *The Guardians in Action*, 146: "For all its beauty, *Phaedrus* not only contains some crucially important falsehoods, but by introducing the scientific use of *hē antilogikē technē*," the art of oppositional arguments, which Altman glosses as "the science of deception," the dialogue "gives fair warning that it is itself deceptive." See also 147: "To put it another way: only when 'the science of deception' is applied to 'the three speeches'—especially to the most beautiful of the three—will we be able to recognize *Phaedrus* as the fairest possible warning about the dangers to come (*poi*), and thus to grasp why it directly follows *Timaeus-Critias* (*pothen*) in the Reading Order of Plato's dialogues." There are, perhaps, two things worth keeping in mind when evaluating Altman's meta-hermeneutic of the Platonic dialogues. First, Altman's interpretation of the *Phaedrus* is not an interpretation of the *Phaedrus* so much as it is an interpretation of the corpus and the *Phaedrus's* place in it. While Plato may indeed have intended for his corpus to be taken as a whole, there's a danger of *functionalizing* the individual dialogues with respect to their place in the whole rather than letting them speak as themselves (relative) wholes within the greater whole. Second, any unitarian reading of the corpus has to take into consideration the original function the dialogues served and to what extent they were "published" (a somewhat misleading anachronism). If, as, for example, Capra suggests, "the dialogues were indeed meant for the general public, then it follows that Plato did not assume any systematic reading of his works on the part of his readers and would have allowed for the possibility that they would have only a limited knowledge of them" (*Plato's Four Muses*, 13; *sed contra*: Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 80 and Hatab, "Writing Knowledge," 326, who both claim that the dialogues were not meant to be published in an open market but were instead occasional pieces to be used intra-academically for intellectual exploration and debate).

¹³ See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 151-156. The primary aspect of the Palinode recanted, as Griswold sees it, is any semblance of noetic certainty which would appear to transgress the limits of our capacity to know with certainty the "true shapes of things" (240); we can have *gnōsis*, but not *epistēmē*, which is reserved for the gods. Accordingly, we would do well to heed Griswold's warning that we must be wary of taking our invention (*poiēsis*) as if it were insightful discovery (*theōria*); cf. *Self-Knowledge*, 132.

10. By contrast, we have argued from the beginning of this project and will continue to argue that the Palinode is the unrecanted fulcrum of the *Phaedrus*. The relative merits of Griswold’s “recantation” thesis and of my overarching thesis about the dialogue’s structure can’t be judged except on the basis of how each illuminates the whole, and so here, I put Griswold’s claim in suspension in order to develop how the drama contributes to the whole, as I see it. The success of my structural thesis (articulated in Chapter 1) will have to be judged, ultimately, by the extent to which it illuminates the parts.

11. If we can assume, for the sake of argument, that Phaedrus and Socrates do love each other in some sense, that Phaedrus is converted by Socrates to some extent, and that neither Plato nor Socrates retracts anything essential to the Palinodic account of love, then we can move on to consider to what extent the dialogue’s drama illustrates the nature and effects of love on real, incarnate people. What we find, I claim, is that the dramatics of the dialogue give flesh to the Palinode’s claims in a number of ways, especially insofar as the dialogue’s dramatics reflect the ambiguity in love that we see when we put Socrates’s two speeches side by side, and insofar as Socrates and Phaedrus both undergo transformations akin to those that take place in the Palinode’s lover and beloved.¹⁴

12. The *Phaedrus* dramatically presents three intersecting love relationships (Lysias and Phaedrus, Phaedrus and Socrates, Socrates and Isocrates). In the first two relationships, at least, love poses clear dangers for both the lover and beloved, akin to the dangers against which the anti-erotic speeches warn.¹⁵ But each of these relationships also showcase significant

¹⁴ The anonymous *Prolegomena* (section iv) attest to Plato’s desire to “give flesh to”—to incarnate—the philosophical content of his dialogues in their drama; see note 116 to Ch. 1.

¹⁵ Socrates’s relationship with Isocrates is only discussed in the dialogue’s conclusion (278e-279b), and the character of the relationship is left underdetermined, though Socrates does seem to think Isocrates is a promising beloved. However, Phaedrus has to *remind* Socrates of his beloved (278e), and it’s unclear what

ambiguity, reflecting the Palinode's reevaluation of the anti-erotic warnings. We will first consider Phaedrus's relationship with Lysias before moving on to Phaedrus's relationship with Socrates, wherein Phaedrus's role in the pederastic relationship (or in the philosophical revision thereof) switches from being the lover to the beloved. Before moving to the relationships, a few notes on the dramatic scene are warranted.

§2. Love's Ambiguity in the Dramatic Scenery

1. Commentators have long noted that the *Phaedrus* devotes more attention to its topography and setting than nearly all of the other dialogues. Capra characterizes the scenery well:

The landscape of the *Phaedrus* is not so much a gentle, out-of-town glade as a jungle of symbols, often deeply ambiguous, and designed to trigger all kinds of associations in the minds of Plato's contemporaries. [...] The importance of the landscape can hardly be overestimated, and it is important to note that ancient readers, much more so than ourselves, would have felt its spell throughout the dialogue.¹⁶

Socrates describes at length the beauty of the grove (*katagōgē*, 230b), to which Phaedrus has guided him as a stranger (*exenagētai*, 230c). This *locus amoenus* quickly became *the locus classicus* for erotically-charged conversation, so much so that at the beginning of Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love*, he has Flavianos beseech Autoboulos not to belabor the introduction of his father's story about love-matters with a lengthy description of the beautiful scenery and of "all the other commonplaces on which writers seize, as they endeavor with more enthusiasm than success

the significance of this reminder is (does it indicate that Socrates does not actually consider Isocrates his beloved? Or does it indicate a lapse in Socrates's memory, perhaps on account of the effect Phaedrus has had on Socrates throughout the dialogue? Is Phaedrus reverting to being a mere gossip? Has Socrates been so thoroughly possessed by the local deities that he's forgotten "mother and brother" and beloved?). There are good extra-dramatic reasons for the Isocratean reference (as we've had occasion to note in footnotes in this chapter and the prior chapter), but what's relevant to our concerns here are the intra-dramatic reasons for Isocrates's surprising appearance.

¹⁶ Capra, *Plato's Four Muses*, 17.

to endorse their work with Plato's Ilissos" (*Erōtikos*, 749a).¹⁷ Ferrari notes the significance of the setting for interpreting the *Phaedrus*, for he finds in the setting's *refusal* to stay in the background a vital hermeneutical key for understanding the relationship between the two halves of the dialogue.¹⁸

2. The erotically-charged, divinely-haunted setting continues to assert itself through the dialogue (especially between the prologue and the myth of the Cicadas). The pair's time under the shade of the plane-tree (*platanos*, 230b), which keeps at bay the brightness of the noontide sun (242a, 259a, d), and which serves as the perch from which the Cicadas can make their assessment of whether the pair deserve the "gift of honor" they have to give from the gods (259b), likewise adds to the erotic character of the idyll, for they spend their time discussing love matters. In addition to the speeches, they bandy about highly erotically charged language (discussed below) and consider the mythical story of Boreas's abduction of Oreithuia, a deeply ambiguous erotic story.

3. Following Flavianus's advice, we need not belabor the point by addressing all of the various ways in which the scene befits the erotic discourse, for that has already been adequately done by a number of scholars. Instead, we'll focus, briefly, on how the scene itself portends the "pharmacological" ambiguity of love we discussed in Chapter 4 (§3.2), since this is something that has, perhaps, been insufficiently noted. There are two points of concern: the

¹⁷ Plutarch, *Dialogue on Love* [= *Erōtikos* = *Amatorius*], *Moralia*, Vol. IX, trans. Edwin Minar, Jr., F. H. Sandbach, and W. C. Helmbold (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1961).

¹⁸ See *Listening to the Cicadas*, 34-35: "Plato's extraordinary attention to the topography in the *Phaedrus* is his means of orienting readers toward the dialogue's central philosophic concerns and guiding their reaction to its singular structure." A number of scholars have made much of the fact that the *Phaedrus* is one of the few dialogues set outside the city. The tendency, however, is not to consider how the particular elements of the scenery contribute to the dialogue's political character; for a recent counter-example, see Ian Leask, "Statues and Political Power in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Japanese Mission Journal*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (2021).

myth of Boreas and the two trees. I claim that both of these aspects of the prologue showcase love's ambiguity: that is, both aspects of the prologue force us to ask whether love is an irrational passion that leads us violently toward pleasure or whether instead love is a divine gift by which the lover is formed and elevated so as to be able to engage with reality rightly. The ambiguity in the scenery and discussion topics of the prologue set the stage for and anticipate the ambiguity that reveals itself in the lovers' relationship as dramatized in both the Lysian-Phaedrean relationship and the Phaedrean-Socratean relationship.

§2.1. Boreas Reevaluated

4. The myth to which Phaedrus alludes, which had legendarily taken place “further downstream two or three stades” (229c),¹⁹ is the story of how Boreas, the North Wind, abducted the young Oreithuia while she was playing with Pharmakeia (229c).²⁰ When Phaedrus asks, in the name of Zeus, whether Socrates thinks that this mythical story (*mythologēma*) is true, Socrates says he wouldn't be “out of place” (*atopos*) if he, like his wise contemporaries, didn't believe that it was literally true, for one could easily give a demythologizing interpretation of the story as a strong wind toppling a young girl—who'd been on some kind of drugs—down from the rocks upon which she had been playing (229c).²¹ But Socrates quickly dismisses this line of inquiry since it would be unpleasurable;²² rather, he must devote himself to his true goal, to know himself, “as the Delphic inscription enjoins” (229e). “It seems laughable,” he says, “for me to think about other things when I am still ignorant about myself” (229e-230a). As

¹⁹ Scully notes that this is about a quarter of a mile away (*Plato's Phaedrus*, 5, note 14).

²⁰ That the myth is supposed to be ambiguous is, perhaps, indicated by the uncertainty about where it happened: did it happen further down on the Ilissos, as Socrates initially claims, or did it happen in the Areopagus according to the alternate story Socrates mentions (229d)?

²¹ Capra notes that *mythologēma* is a “very rare word probably drawn from some kind of rationalistic jargon” (*Plato's Four Muses*, 49).

²² Socrates later censures the anti-erotic conception of love developed in his first speech and in Lysias's speech as “unfree” (cf. 243c).

his reformulation of the problem of self-knowledge in mythical terms indicates (see 230a), Socrates has no problem with thinking that myth can provide for us a way forward into essential questions and, perhaps, even manifest truth.²³ And so, rather than consider the myth in terms of some deflationary factualism, Socrates indicates that the myth has more to say to us if we ask it for its *meaning*; it is here, in the *meaning* of the myth, that we find the myth's crucial ambiguity, an ambiguity that anticipates the ambiguity of love operative in the dialogue. When we investigate the meaning of the myth, we see that it is *directly* related to the problem of self-knowledge, for the meaning of the myth is about the nature of (human) desire.

5. If we take the myth as disclosive of truths about the nature of desire rather than as a fictionalization of a story about an otherwise mundane, happenstance event, the ambiguity

²³ On this point, see Kirkland, "Socrates *contra scientiam, pro fabula*." Kirkland argues that Socrates distinguishes himself from the demythologizing scientists on account of the fact that philosophy, like myth, but unlike science, retains an abiding attention to *aporia*. Philosophy and myth both preserve a "distance" between the knower and the object to be known, whereas science tries to collapse this distance (314). Philosophy and myth can both preserve such a distance by recognizing the way in which "the divine radically exceeds the sphere of human experience" (318). Despite this radical excess, "the divine is always here, with us, in everything and we are always already opened up to it through its many mediated appearances via *doxa*" (320). There is much to be affirmed in Kirkland's account, but to do so, we would need to rethink Kirkland's understanding of the meaning of divine excess. Kirkland presents the divine as preserving a distance from us because it "withdraws" itself from us, "thereby, disallow[ing] a complete grasp by our human intelligence" (320); this withdrawal is "*distance*, rather than transcendence" (320). This, I think, is a (Heideggerian?) imposition on the Platonic text, which accurately tracks important features, but which nevertheless changes the *meaning* of those features by interpreting the divine excess as withdrawal rather than transcendence. Kirkland's shift in characterization seems to be motivated by a worry that to speak of transcendence would be "to imply two discrete regions or spaces, juxtaposed such that one exists wholly independently of the other" (319). Despite denying divine transcendence, Kirkland can preserve divine excess as withdrawal by seeing the divine as always out ahead of us (horizontally, not vertically), always keeping itself at bay, allowing us only to catch the traces, traces which are omnipresent but which nevertheless preserve the divine distance. This amounts to an *immanentization* of the divine, even as it preserves "distance." Now, it must be affirmed that Kirkland's worry is a genuine worry—Plato is *not* a dualist, *pace* his many, many Gnosticizing readers. Nevertheless, resolving the worry about dualism by collapsing transcendence into immanence is both philosophically unnecessary and contrary to the text. The harmony and, indeed, mutual necessity of transcendence and immanence has been ably articulated by Perl (see especially "The Presence of the Paradigm"), as well as Schindler (see especially "Plato and the Problem of Love"); likewise, the metaphysics of images and the "radiance" of being we will develop in Ch. 6 shows that one can maintain a distinction between the transcendent and the immanent without splitting them into "two worlds

of the myth opens up, and its significance becomes more apparent.²⁴ While the common interpretation of the myth—that Socrates disputes with the demythologizers about whether one should be using one’s leisure-time for explaining *away* all sorts of mythical oddities (*atopiai*) or instead for the quest for self-knowledge—is certainly correct, it does not account for the whole significance of the myth, for the myth presents a truth-claim about *love*, a truth-claim which very much motivates Socrates’s speeches. The immediate context of the myth suggests to us that it is a story of a divine rape. When we hear Phaedrus’s use of “seized” (*harpasai*, 229b), we are to understand that Oreithuia had been violently, non-consensually abducted. Traditionally, Boreas was said to have fallen in love with the Athenian princess Oreithuia, daughter of Erectheus. After failing to seduce her, he resorted to violence (a characteristic commonly attributed to Boreas) and snatched her away, contrary to her and her father’s wishes. Oreithuia was then forced to marry Boreas and bear him two sons.²⁵ Afterwards, as Benardete notes,

The Athenians established an altar to Boreas on the Ilissus after they had summoned Boreas to help them at the time of Xerxes’ invasion of Greece (an oracle had told them to appeal to their son-in-law), and a storm sprang up suddenly off the coast of Magnesia and sank no less than four hundred Persian ships (Herodotus 7.188-192). Socrates implies, then, that the Athenians’ choice of the altar’s site was based on the official version of the place of Oreithuia’s rape.²⁶

The myth of Boreas, then, is the story of rapist-turned-ally, upon whom the Athenians could call for aid, an aid which required a certain price, but a price the Athenians seem to have been content to pay.

²⁴ Accordingly, I claim that this myth has *significantly* more “organic significance” than just a way of “preclud[ing] any questions that might arise later on about the local divinities who inspire Socrates,” as Hackforth suggests (*Phaedrus*, 26).

²⁵ Cf. Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 273, and Ryan, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 95.

²⁶ Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*, 111.

6. Given the centrality of violence and force in the anti-erotic speech, we might, as Griswold suggests, interpret this story “as a rudimentary allegory about human nature as it is defined in [the two anti-erotic] speeches.”²⁷ The myth—whether interpreted allegorically as a depiction of the nature of desire or demythologized as a story of a chance event—seems to teach us that we are highly contingent beings, surrounded by danger, always at risk of being swept away by some overpowering force, whether that’s the violent love of someone we are unable to refuse or the violence of an indifferent nature.²⁸ We are, as Boethius had thought before his philosophical (re)conversion, the thralls of fickle Fortune, upon whose wheel we turn.²⁹ We can be swept up either by love in the manner of the beloved’s abduction, unable to resist the lover’s forceful wiles, or we can be swept up by love in the manner of the lover’s being driven mad by Eros—the limb-loosener (*lusimelēs*), who subdues both mind (*noón*) and thoughtfulness (*epiphrona*), as Hesiod says (*Theogony* 120-122)—unable to resist our insatiable lust for beauty. Given that the drama of the dialogue suggests an identification of Boreas with Socrates, Phaedrus with Oreithuia, and Pharmakeia with Lysias,³⁰ the Boreas myth’s

²⁷ Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 37.

²⁸ Griswold is, I think, wrong to suggest that “Socrates’ proposed demythologization of the Oreithuia story robs it of its human significance, replacing eros with death caused by natural factors, and so renders the story useless for self-knowledge” (*Self-Knowledge*, 38), for if such a story turned out to be the whole truth of the myth (as it, in fact, does not), then we would be confronted with the painful truth that we live in a violent, hostile, and meaningless world, structured by chaos (as Hesiod claims, “Chaos was born first;” *Theogony* 116) rather than by intelligibility and goodness, as Plato thinks. The demythologizers are wrong to read the story reductively, as they are inclined to do, but if we grant that they have the truth of the matter, then the story is useful for coming to self-knowledge since one would come to recognize that one lived in an absurd world.

²⁹ See Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Book II.

³⁰ See Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 14: “Without being aware of it, Phaedrus himself anticipates his own identification with the mountain nymph Oreithyia, for Socrates will soon try to ‘carry off’ Phaedrus with beautiful speeches, eliciting Phaedrus’s promise of a statue in his honor (235d-e, 236d). Socrates renders Phaedrus’s mythological allusion even more appropriate by adding a reference to Pharmakeia, companion of Oreithyia (229c), just as he later claims that the charm which captures his attention and lures him on is not Phaedrus himself, but Phaedrus playing with the drug (*pharmakon*) of the speech by Lysias (230d, 234d, cf. 274e). While the myth Phaedrus recalls serves as an image of the natural seduction scene taking place, Socrates’ supplement hints at the role in that scene played by the seductive drug of the written work.”

presentation of love as an irrational, destructive, consumptive force should make us wary of the dialogue's characterization of the love relationship between the interlocutors.³¹

7. However, insofar as Socrates later retracts the blasphemous assault on Love, we are invited to revisit the Boreas myth and see if Socrates's retraction concerning Love allows the Boreas myth to speak to us in a new key.³² If Boreas is a god (as the Greeks take him to be), and if the gods are divine by their proximity to the superheavenly things (249c), a proximity secured by their perfect orientation toward the good (242e), then the standard interpretation of the myth as a civically-licensed rape could *not* be true.³³ It would seem we owe a Palinode to Boreas: This account is not genuine (*etumos*), nor did you assault Oreithuia, nor did you push her off a cliff (cf. 243a). As Sweeney suggests:

The urbane sophists explain away the myths and so learn nothing from them; Socrates will not take up their urbane approach that covers over nature, the divine, and the soul. He accepts the myths and so can find the truth contained therein: a woman is filled with the wind of a god (divine impulse), is lifted up, transported out of her place, and brought into the company of the gods. The myth is a depiction of

³¹ Cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 37: "A violent and 'accidental' death is the truth of a story about violent desire. In reality and in fiction, Oreithuia is subjected to an act that dissolves her as a person, just as (according to Socrates' nonlover) does the 'love' a wolf has for a lamb (241d1)." As Osborne notes, the Boreas myth primes the reader to think of *erōs* as a kind of violent force; thus, when we witness the mock-courtship taking place between Socrates and Phaedrus, we are led to expect some kind of sexual violence. Osborne goes on to suggest that Phaedrus metaphorically "rapes" Socrates by overpowering him and forcing him to do as he wishes; Socrates signifies the rape by covering his head in shame, signifying that he has become the passive partner (see "Seduction of the Word," 269-270).

³² The invitation is not, however, one commonly taken up. Hermias provides precedent both for an intentionally-doubled interpretation of the Boreas myth (albeit, both interpretations Hermias provides are sanitized) and for an interpretation which brings out the positive, providential possibilities of the Boreas myth (concerning which we discuss below). See *Scholia* 30.15-31.31, esp. 31.9-10: "And Boreas is the providence of the gods that shines upon the secondary things from above." As McCoy notes, the *Republic's* critique of the traditional poets need not be taken as an absolute ban for a number of reasons, prominent among which is the fact that the young will have difficulty ascertaining the "depth" sense (*huponoia*) of traditional poetry without guidance. This suggests that traditional poetry may not be all bad; indeed, a traditional tale—such as that of Boreas—"may have a greater depth of meaning than its surface sense, and that the underlying sense may be of value if it is accessible" (*Image and Argument*, 20).

³³ For an analogous argument (about the cicadas rather than Boreas), see Gottfried, "Pan, The Cicadas, and Plato's Use of Myth," 180. By extension, a post-Palinode reevaluation of the Boreas myth constitute another "example of Plato rewriting traditional myth to conform with his own metaphysics" (182). Likewise, as Brisson notes, traditionally the gods are full of jealous envy (*phthonos*), but Socrates claims that envy "stands outside the divine dance" (247a); see "The Notion of *Phthonos*," 210-212.

divine mania and *ecstasis*; it tells of the rapture of a soul taken from the city. The clever sophists cannot see what the myth unveils about the relation of the soul to the divine.³⁴

After the Palinode, we are invited to see Boreas's "capture" of Oreithuia in light of the lover's "capture" of the beloved in the Palinode, a capture that may indeed have been driven by manic desire, but a capture that is ultimately oriented toward genuine, formative service, so that the beloved too can be divine, like the gods, by proximity to the superheavenly beings. This would be the *deeper* truth of the myth, obscured by the persistence of our misunderstandings of the divine, of love, and of ourselves. The myth, then, is not ultimately a forceful reminder of our utter subjection to the powers that be, but instead is a calling to mind of the wondrous way in which the divine pulls us, ecstatically, beyond ourselves.³⁵ If so, the dialogue's indication that the three characters of the dialogue (Socrates, Phaedrus, Lysias) should be associated with the three characters of the myth (Boreas, Oreithuia, Pharmakeia) transforms; Socrates is no longer a danger to Phaedrus, but is, instead, his liberation, the one who calls Phaedrus to ecstatic

³⁴ Sweeney, "Pedagogical Settings," 95. There is a tension concerning Socrates's attitude toward traditional myth between the *Phaedrus* (where Socrates seems willing to accept that there is wisdom to be had in traditional myth) and other dialogues (where Socrates is very critical of the traditional myths' depictions of the gods, as at *Euthyphro* 6a), and the scholarly literature is divided on this issue. We can't resolve this issue here but instead suggest that, for the *Phaedrus* at least, Socrates is open to finding wisdom in traditional myths, so long as they are properly interpreted. For a comprehensive interpretation of the *Phaedrus* with respect to its myths, see Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*. See also Latona, "This Tale is Not My Own."

³⁵ In a magazine piece, Mark Shiffman has characterized the shift in Greek thinking from its prephilosophical understanding of personhood to its philosophical understanding of personhood (in Plato and Aristotle, at least) in similar terms: "The pre-philosophic pagan human being is the subject of powers, and also subjected to powers. The polytheistic or animist world is one swarming with conflicting powers, which occasionally bundle together into unities that are never quite stable. [...] The pagan subject is a temporary unity, able to channel and placate and enlist the powers of this world for a time, until he eventually dissolves back into the all. [...] The Sophists, who claimed to know how to make reason the instrument of the concentration and command of power, exploited this vision. [...] Starting with Socrates, ancient philosophers in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition contended that the human being is best understood as the subject of wonder. Awakened by wonder, rational inquiry opens us to a truth not ultimately grounded in power, but in the Good. The subject of wonder is not simply a meeting point of accumulated powers gathered at a center of control. On the contrary, he is a subject that is always also oriented toward a center outside itself. The wondering being is an 'ecstatic' subject" ("Humanity 4.5," *First Things* [2015]; <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/11/humanity-45>).

wonder.³⁶ The Boreas myth has shown itself to be a *pharmakon*, a dangerous poison when construed as a story that tells lies about the divine (the kind that was censored in *Republic* III), but a powerful remedy when construed as a story that illuminates divine care.

§2.2. The Grove's Two Trees

8. Socrates and Phaedrus come to discuss the Boreas myth while on the way to a “very tall plane tree (*hupsēlotatēn platanon*)” (229a) Phaedrus had spotted. Since the plane tree, a tree known for its magnificent, widely-spreading crown (hence the name *platanos*, a later form of *platanistos*, ultimately from *platus*, broad), will offer refuge from the harsh noontide sun, it makes for an ideal place to rest while Phaedrus recites the speech.³⁷ In addition to the tree’s shade, Phaedrus points out the “moderate breeze, with grass as well for sitting, or, if we prefer, we could lie down” (229b). While they are talking about Boreas, demythologization, and self-knowledge, they arrive at the tree to which Phaedrus was leading (*ēges*) Socrates (230a). Upon seeing the grove to which Phaedrus had been leading, Socrates is overtaken by its beauty:³⁸

By Hera, it’s a beautiful resting-place (*katagōgē*). The plane-tree (*platanos*) is tall and has wonderfully spreading branches; and there is the lovely shade of a tall willow shrub (*agnos*; colloquially, “chaste-tree”) in beautiful bloom, diffusing through the place a most sweet perfume. And below the plane-tree a graceful spring flows with its cooling waters, as our feet bear witness. Judging from the statues and images, the spot seems sacred, a haunt of the Nymphs and the river god Achelous. (230b)³⁹

³⁶ Hermias also takes Socrates as the providential Boreas to Phaedrus’s Oreithuia; see *Scholia*, 31.27-30.

³⁷ Sallis suggests that the tree symbolically functions to protect Socrates and Phaedrus from undue exposure to the sun and the other gods (thereby suggesting that exposure to the divine is a dangerous enterprise, one which we might want to limit); see *Being and Logos*, 123. As the rest of this subsection will make plain, such a reading of the relationship between the human and divine is partial and needs to be clarified by the fact that the gods, if indeed they are gods, cannot do evil (as we saw already in §2.1).

³⁸ See D. White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 22: “the setting radiates beauty to the senses of sight, touch, and hearing” (and also smell, given Socrates’s comments on the “sweet perfume” diffusing the place on account of the willow shrub).

³⁹ See Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 15, note 29 on how the invocation of Hera in conjunction with the scenery evokes “Homer’s portrayal of Hera’s seduction of Zeus.” Herodotus relates that Xerxes was so struck by the beauty of a plane-tree on his road to Sardis that he “was moved to decorate it with golden ornaments and to appoint a guardian for it in perpetuity” (*Histories*, 7.31).

Socrates concludes his paroxysm with an expression of gratitude for Phaedrus to have led him as a stranger (*exenagētai*, 230c) to this place “re-echoing with the summery, high pitch of the cicadas’ chorus” (230c).

9. As we noted above, the setting *refuses* to stay in the background in this dialogue.⁴⁰ Socrates calls our attention to the grove, and to two trees in particular, and we should wonder if there’s a philosophically relevant point to this description or if, instead, this is just pretty, yet unnecessary, artistry.⁴¹ Three terms stick out here: the grove (*katagōgē*; recalled in the myth of the Cicadas at 259a with a reference to the *katagōgion*), the plane-tree (*platanos*), and the willow shrub (*agnos*). At the risk of contradicting Socrates, country places and trees *do* have much to teach us (230d; Socrates is more open to the cant of trees at 275c-d)

10. *Katagōgē*, the “resting-place,” could be more literally rendered as a “leading-downward.” This word is used solely here in the Platonic corpus (likewise for its cousin at 259a). Given the rarity of this word in the Greek of Plato’s day, given the surprising frequency of ‘agogic’ terminology in the *Phaedrus*, and given the even greater frequency and variety of ‘agogic’ terminology in the dialogue’s prologue (*agein* and its compounds show up 10 times in

⁴⁰ See Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 3.

⁴¹ Helmbold and Holther take the way in which the two trees frame the dialogue as philosophically significant, contributing to the dialogue’s unity by acting as presaging symbols (“Unity,” 389-390). They suggest that the two trees represent Platonic love (the agnus) and discourse (the plane). I’ll give an alternate reading of the symbolism of the two trees over the course of this subsection. More generally, see Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence*, 17: “Plato’s writing exhibits the conviction that the place of a dialogue is nothing incidental to the content or character of the discussion that ensues therein.” Further, “what the dialogues capture, and what most philosophical essays ignore, is that most of our philosophic discussions are, in a non-pejorative sense of the terms, ad hominem and ad locum. They take place in given contexts and with given people, and these factors are often determinative both of the content and the manner of our discussion” (23). Hyland is right to note the contingency, occasionality, and conditioned features of dramatic *logoi* as opposed to the wonted neutrality of a treatise; however, he is, I think, wrong to take finitude and transcendence as basically incompatible (where there is transcendence, it is always *finite* transcendence, according to Hyland; in other words, any “transcendence” available to us is relativized by our finitude; Griswold makes a similar claim on the basis of the topographic situatedness of the dialogue in *Self-Knowledge*, 34.).

227a-230e), we should suspect that Plato chose this word, rather than a more commonplace synonym, deliberately on account of its lexical roots.⁴² The grove acts as a kind of *conduit*, wherein divine inspiration can be *led-down* to those present. It is the place where the Cicadas, like the daimonic interpreters (*hermeneus*; cf. *Symposium* 202e) of Diotima’s speech, can act as intermediaries between the human and divine, reporting back to the Muses concerning “who on earth honors which one of them” (259c). As we progress in the discussion, we see that Socrates is more and more thoroughly possessed by the local gods, and as his possession is rendered more complete, he becomes increasingly open to the truth about the true nature of things (247c), as we’ll discuss in Chapter 6.

11. When we start to consider the trees which make up the grove, we immediately see that the willow shrub (*agnos*; vitex agnus castus) has a ‘katagoric’ effect, for it is “diffusing (*parechoi*) throughout the place a most sweet perfume” (230b). According to Greek custom and medicinal lore, the willow shrub is a “chaste-tree,” alleged to have anaphrodisiacal effects.⁴³ As it diffuses its “most sweet perfume,” it presumably would act to temper any arousal of those under its influence. We might see in the anaphrodisiacal willow shrub an anticipation of the anti-erotic *resistance* to love, a *pharmakon* that might allow for “right opinion with reason” to take the lead (*agonsēs*) in place of our desire for pleasure, resulting in that condition which we call moderation (237e-238a). Such a moderation, when simply mortal, “dilutes” intimacy and begets a “slavish economizing” in the soul; it will prevent the soul from being erotically drawn toward the superheavenly place for 9000 years (256e-257a).

⁴² See Ch. 1. Cf. Scully, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 6, note 16. We’ll see that the *katagōgē* is significant in other ways in the next chapter.

⁴³ *Agnos*, the tree, is distinct from *hagnos*, chaste, only in accentuation and breathing (note that the diacritical markings for accentuation and breathing are a post-Platonic, Hellenistic invention). Likewise, *agnos*, chaste-tree, is connected to *agonos*, sterile.

12. But, we should note, moderation need not be *opposed* to *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*, for the soul whose memory of the superheavenly things is awakened by the beauty of the beloved recalls the “essence of the beautiful [...] standing alongside moderation on a holy pedestal” (254b). Beyond being an anaphrodisiac, the “chaste-tree,” sacred to Hera (whom Socrates invoked at the beginning of his description of the landscape), also evokes marital chastity, for its branches were gathered and spread on women’s beds during the Thesmophoria.⁴⁴ Given the associations of the willow shrub, we might expect that chastity is an important feature of love (as is eventually confirmed in the *Palinode*, when the lovers’ have “enslaved what enables viciousness to enter the soul,” 256b).⁴⁵ As we saw with respect to Boreas, the merely human

⁴⁴ See Hugo Rahner, “The Willow Branch of the Next World,” *CrossCurrents*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1962), 472ff. Hera was also thought to have been born under a willow in Samos, as Pausanias relates (*Description of Greece*, 7.4.4; *lugos* = *agnos*). Dorter also notes that Hera “was identified with the agnus” and suggests that Socrates’s “initial unproductive sobriety” before being divinely possessed is reflective of Hera (“Imagery and Philosophy,” 281). For an overview of the Thesmophoria and the relevance of this festival to the imagery of the *Republic*, see McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 117ff.

⁴⁵ We might wonder if, perhaps, Socrates is being a bit too puritanical here by speaking of enslaving the black horse’s desire for pleasure, for, generally speaking, human sexuality *is* recognized to be a good. Plato has often been taken to be baldly “anti-sex” because of claims like the one to which this note is appended (for prominent examples, cf. Daniel Boyarin, “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Platonic Love?” *Toward a Theology of Eros*, eds. Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller [New York: Fordham University Press, 2009], 3-4). But we should also wonder if there’s a faulty assumption in this judgment. Does enslaving pleasure-lust *entail* a thorough-going sexual abstinence? Or is there a way by which lovers can be sexually active *within* a chaste relationship like that between the *Palinode*’s lovers (or, at least, within an equal or equalized version thereof)? Plutarch, at least, thought so, and when he writes his own *Dialogue on Love*, he opens the Platonic assessment of rightly-ordered *erōs* from within to allow for a rightly-ordered *erōs* within the marital relationship. (He also significantly alters the Greek assumptions about the relative merits of male and female by opening up rightly-ordered *erōs* to women). But regardless of later developments, we can point back to 247e for the crucial text: “And once [the soul] has similarly looked upon and banqueted on other things which really are, she re-enters heaven, returning home. When she arrives, the charioteer takes the horses to the manger, providing nectar for feed and ambrosia for drink.” The important point is that it’s not only the charioteer who is nourished; rather, both horses (including the pesky wanton horse, who’s so inclined toward illicit sexual pleasure) are nourished as well with that which is appropriate for them. They are nourished *after* the charioteer is nourished, but they are nourished all the same. And so, there seems to be reason to suggest that Plato could, based on his own principles, accept the goodness of human sexuality within a chaste relationship, so long as it was secondary to the lovers’ intellectual nourishment and recognition of the holistic good of the other. While there is not space to pursue the point here, an argument for the *restoration* of the goodness of sexuality, when connected to rightly-ordered love, could be made by analogy to Schindler’s argument for the restoration of the goodness of money when it is functioning as an icon rather than an idol (to use language I will develop further in Ch. 6; see the last few pages of “Why Socrates Didn’t Charge”).

perception of matters only gets the picture half-right (then, we misinterpreted the abduction as rape rather than rapture; now, we misinterpret chastity as anti-sexuality); but, when reconnected to (a memory of) the divine, the divine which is being led-down (*katagōgē*) to this grove (as we'll discuss in Ch. 6), our perception is transformed.

13. The plane-tree (*platanos*; *platanus orientalis*) likewise showcases a basic ambiguity analogous to that of the willow shrub. Just as the willow shrub has a chastening character, so does the plane-tree have an *erotic* character. As the willow shrub is sacred to Hera, *the* bride among brides of the gods, so the plane-tree is sacred to Helen, *the* bridge among brides of human beings, the primary symbol of Greek eroticism (“she who overcame in beauty all that is human,” as Sappho puts it; fr. 16),⁴⁶ one over whom the Greeks were willing to go to *the war of all wars*. Evidence for Helen’s connection to the plane-tree can be seen in the Hellenistic poet Theocritus’s “Epithalamium to Helen” (*Idylls* 18.38-48):⁴⁷

Beautiful and gracious girl, now you are a housewife. But we shall go early tomorrow to the running course and the flower meadows to gather fragrant garlands, and we shall have many thoughts of you, Helen, as suckling lambs miss the udder of the ewe that bore them. We shall be the first to plait for you a garland of low-growing trefoil and to set it on a shady plane tree (*plataniston*); and we shall be the first to take smooth oil from its silver flask and let it drip beneath that shady plane (*plataniston*). In the bark there will be an inscription, so that a passerby may read in Dorian style, ‘Revere me: I am Helen’s tree’ (*sebou m’: Helenas phuton eimi*).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sappho, *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, trans. Anne Carson (New York: Vintage, 2003).

⁴⁷ An “epithalamium” is a song sung to celebrate a marriage. Capra argues that “Helen is present in the very landscape of the *Phaedrus*, given that Plato’s celebrated plane-tree seems to be designed deliberately to evoke the arboreal cult of Helen *dendritis*,” that is, Helen of the Tree (*Plato’s Four Muses*, 59). See 65-69 for a review of the ways in which Helen was associated with the plane-tree in Greek literature. Pausanias speaks of a cult of “Helen of the Tree” on account of the fact that, according to one story, Helen was hanged on a tree at the command of Polyxo as an act of vengeance for her husband slaughtered in the Trojan War (*Description of Greece*, 3.19.10). Ashley Pryor also notes the significance of the dramatic scene and Helen’s presence therein, but she interprets these features in terms of the relationship between Socrates and Plato rather than as significant for what takes place within the drama of the text; see “Socrates in Drag: Images of Helen of Troy in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Epoché*, Vol. 14 (2009).

⁴⁸ *Theocritus, Moschus, Bion*, ed. and trans. Neil Hopkinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). Each of the four uses of “revere” (*sebomai*) in the *Phaedrus* (250e, 251a, 252a, 254b) refer to the lover’s reverential attitude (or failure to be reverential) toward the beautiful (either *in* the beloved or itself by itself).

Given that Theocritus flourished about a century after Plato, we might be hesitant to assume that Theocritus's association of Helen with the plane-tree was "in the air" in Plato's day; however, it has long been thought that Theocritus here borrowed from *Stesichorus's* work on Helen,⁴⁹ which is explicitly mentioned by Plato. Not only is Stesichorus's *Helen* mentioned, but it occasions an essential dramatic turn in the dialogue, for Socrates realizes that the only way to purify himself of his sin against Eros is to give a Palinode, just as Stesichorus had (243a-b).

14. Just as Stesichorus will retract his claim that Helen sailed to Troy, thereby recasting her as a symbol of beauty within marital fidelity rather than as a symbol of war-inducing lust and guilt, so Socrates will retract the implication (if not the content) of his attack on love.⁵⁰ Little is known with certainty of Stesichorus's Palinode, but one prominent suggestion is that the accusation and the recantation are two movements of the same work, a work which was meant to be *performed* as a whole, with an intervening dramatic flourish, wherein Stesichorus would experience an epiphany and dramatically unveil himself.⁵¹ This is *exactly* what Socrates does.⁵² When Socrates delivers his anti-erotic speech, he does so veiled, *unable* to see the beauty around him.⁵³ He is unable to look at Phaedrus while delivering his speech without being

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 258. Capra notes that Stesichorus was "popular and well-known during Socrates' and Plato's lifetimes" and "potentially known to every Athenian" (*Plato's Four Muses*, 28). See *Plato's Four Muses*, Ch. 1 for the thoroughly Stesichorean structure of the *Phaedrus*.

⁵⁰ Socrates's anti-erotic speech is *not* false, so long as one accepts the later distinction between humanly-sick love and divinely-mad love. The first speech, taken by itself, does *imply* that one should prefer the non-lover to the lover, but this implication disappears the moment one allows the aforesaid distinction. Humanly-sick love is dangerous, but this by itself doesn't amount to a critique of love, since divinely inspired love does not fall prey to the same criticisms.

⁵¹ See Capra, *Plato's Four Muses*, 35-43.

⁵² Likewise, see *ibid.*, 28: "Socrates, I maintain, reenacts Stesichorus' performance closely and subtly, and his two speeches are really the two halves of a uniformly inspired and performative *sunolon*." McCoy notes that ancient Greek literature generally had a performative element, especially since private reading was uncommon (see *Image and Argument*, 30); there is considerable evidence that the Platonic dialogues themselves were meant to be performed (*ibid.*, 11-12).

⁵³ Lebeck notes that "since Eros operates through the eyes, blindness would put an end to all the art of love" ("Central Myth," 280).

stymied by shame (237a), a shame that would only be heightened by speaking ignobly about love *before Helen*, by whom Phaedrus swears in swearing by the plane tree. Given the association of the plane-tree with Helen, and given the Stesichorean tenor of Socrates's love-speech, we might suspect that the Greek ear was well-primed to have first heard in the reference to the plane-tree a symbol of lusty eroticism, only to have later been reprimanded for following that association: this story is not true. The lusty phantom-image has gone off to Troy, but, after the Palinode, the plane-tree remains as a symbol of a Helen purified, a "noble form of love among the free" (243c).

15. The setting of the *Phaedrus* then situates us in a divine grove, where the gods' influence is constantly being led-down to us, where the local deities are ready to inspire us, and it does so with special reference to two trees.⁵⁴ The two trees each have ambiguous connotations. The willow shrub connotes either anti-erotic moderation or a chastity compatible with *erōs* in marriage. The plane-tree, upon whom lusty Helen was said to have been hanged in one tradition, connotes either lusty, hubristic, immoderate *erōs*, the kind in which *force* and *abductions* are the norm, or it connotes the Helen absolved of all guilt, the Helen who did not sail to Troy, a Helen who remained true to Menelaus and who was reunited with him after a decade in Egypt. The *Phaedrus*'s account of love seems to be tethered to these trees, for the anti-erotic presentation of love is that connoted by the plane-tree when not attended by the willow, and the non-lover presents himself as a willow, "diffusing the most sweet perfume," without the madness induced by the plane-tree. The plane without the willows leads to rapine; the willow (*agnos*) without the plane leads to sterility (*agonos*), even a failure to come

⁵⁴ Dorter also highlights the significance of the two trees—"the 'temperate' agnus castus of Hera and the 'passionate' plane tree of Dionysus" ("Imagery and Philosophy," 287)—under which the conversation takes place. I suggest that while the reference to Dionysus is apt, the reference to Helen better accounts for the imagery.

to knowledge (the Greek ear could easily be transported from *agnos* to *agnōs*, unknowing; the connection between non-love and *agnōsia* is heavily suggested by the Palinode.) The Palinode, by contrast, takes full inspiration from the grove and demands that both trees leave their mark together, resulting in an *erōs* fully compatible with chastity and moderation. Both trees, both Hera and Helen, are required, but, as Hermias notes, the plane-tree is the taller, more magnificent of the trees (*hupselotatēn*, 229b);⁵⁵ this is *exactly* what the Palinode will claim about the roles of love and moderation.⁵⁶

§3. Love's Ambiguous Effects on Phaedrus

1. The love shared between Lysias and Phaedrus—whatever sort it is—is profoundly ambiguous. Socrates thrice refers to Lysias as Phaedrus's "darling" (236b, 257b, 279b), indicating that Lysias is the beloved and Phaedrus the lover. Yet Lysias had delivered a speech to Phaedrus arguing in favor of a beloved granting favors to the nonlover; Socrates, unearthing

⁵⁵ Hermias, *Scholia*, 34.13-17.

⁵⁶ Though not directly relevant to the argument just given, we should note that the plane-tree is probably meant to suggest two other referents: the Muses, and Plato himself. On the connection of the Muses and the Cicadas, see, e.g., Alex Hardie, "Philitas and the Plane Tree," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, Bd. 119 (1997), 27-30, who calls attention to the fact that Plato identifies the grove as a *museion* (shrine of the Muses, 278b) and to the frequent connections between the Cicadas, the Nymphs, and the Muses in the *Phaedrus*. "I would suggest that [Plato] is representing a 'Socratic' precursor of the Academic *Museion*, and the association of the Muses with the study of philosophy. Thus, the plane tree may well connect with the sacred grove in the Academy" (28). The fact that the Academy was well-known for its magnificent plane-tree (a feature which Aristophanes puts to comic effect at *Clouds* 1008; see also Capra, *Plato's Four Muses*, 16-23), and the fact that there is both an aural similarity and a common root (*platus* = broad) between "plane-tree" (*platanos*) and "Plato" (*Platōnos* in the genitive) should lead us to think that Plato is "coming very close to breaking the dramatic illusion and revealing his authorial identity" (ibid., 20) by means of a pun, as first noted, among modern commentators, by Robert Zaslavsky (see "A Hitherto Unremarked Pun in the *Phaedrus*," *Apeiron*, Vol. 15, No. 2 [1981]. Ficino had, however, marked this in the 15th century: "the description of the spot stands allegorically for the Academy; the plane tree for Plato; the agnus castus [= willow] bush for the chastity of Platonic and Socratic love; the fountain for the overflowing of the wisdom to be shared; and the rest of the embellishments stand for the oratorical and poetic flowers with which Plato's Academy abounds;" *Commentary* 1.2). Accordingly, we should feel confident saying with Zaslavsky that "the suggestion is very strong that the entire discussion of the *Phaedrus* is carried on *hupo tēi tou Platōnos skiai*" ("under the shadow of Plato;" 115), the one to whom the young went to have their souls led-around to truth and to have their *erōs* reformed.

Lysias's hidden design, implies that Lysias himself is the lover of Phaedrus, masquerading as a non-lover in order to outcompete other suitors (see 237b).⁵⁷

2. It may be that Socrates refers to Lysias as Phaedrus's beloved in jest, in order to draw attention to the fact that Phaedrus is fawning over Lysias as a lover might fawn over a beloved's promise, as Socrates appears to do with respect to Isocrates (279a).⁵⁸ But if Socrates's remarks instead report (within the fictional universe of the drama, at least) a biographical fact about Phaedrus (or even a social perception thereof)—that is, if Phaedrus stands to Lysias as lover to beloved—then Lysias's speech, insofar as it is delivered to Phaedrus (despite its resistance to identifying either a speaker or audience),⁵⁹ reveals itself to be, somehow, even cagier than it initially seems, for it would be the seduction speech of a beloved to his lover. The “non-lover,” whom Socrates unmasks as a “lover in disguise,” may actually be a “beloved in disguise;” without a conception of return-love (*anterōs*) at hand, a beloved experiencing love's call would have no choice but to mask himself as a non-lover. A beloved who would attempt to seduce his lover would run the risk of inverting the pederastic norms; this is socially dangerous territory.⁶⁰ In this case, Lysias stands to Phaedrus as Alcibiades stands to Socrates, as Alcibiades discloses, riskily, in the *Symposium* (see 217a-219d).⁶¹

⁵⁷ Hermias likewise suggests that “there is mutual love between Phaedrus and Lysias and both are lover and beloved, though not with the same [kind of] love” (*Scholia*, 12.23).

⁵⁸ See Yunis, *Phaedrus*, 9.

⁵⁹ Cf. Benardete, *Rhetoric of Morality*, 110-111.

⁶⁰ See Halperin, “Plato and Erotic Reciprocity,” for a review of the norms. *Dover's Greek Homosexuality* provides the standard analysis of ancient Greek pederasty. For Lysias's, the social danger is heightened by the fact that he is a metic (a “resident alien” who didn't have the full rights enjoyed by Athenian citizens).

⁶¹ The situation is only further complicated by the fact that Lysias's birth year is difficult to discern. One tradition has him born (459-457) about a decade before Phaedrus (roughly: b. 444; d. 393); if so, Phaedrus is the *erastēs* of an older man. Another tradition has him born within a year of Phaedrus (see Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002], 190-191); even if Lysias and Phaedrus were nearly the same age, this would be contrary to the older norms of pederasty. Scully notes that recent scholarship (e.g., Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome*) has challenged some aspects of the traditional accounts (e.g., Dover, Halperin) of Greek pederasty;

3. The ambiguity of Lysias’s relationship with Phaedrus (Who is the lover? Who the beloved?) is neither a mere quirk nor an accidental feature of the text, but is instead a profound reflection of an important feature of the non-lover’s argument. Given the non-lover’s economizing framework, which understands the lover as a bad business partner who will only pay back *exactly* what he owes (if, that is, the beloved manages even to get *that* out of him; cf. 231a-b), the non-lover has to make his “sales-pitch” to the beloved on the model of a free contract. The non-lover speaks of his friendship as one which promises long-term, “mutual benefit” (*ōphelian amphoin*, 234c; cf. 233c), and the beloved is supposed to find in this mutual benefit the primary reason to seek out the non-lover’s friendship).⁶² To enter into a free contract for the sake of mutual benefit presupposes *equality* and *reciprocity* (remember: we are all friends here; we’ve claimed—deceptively—to have banished the lovers). The ambiguity of the Phaedrean-Lysian relationship, which dramatically incarnates the anti-erotic speeches’ claims, reflects the *presupposition* of equality and reciprocity in their relationship.⁶³

4. If Lysias stands to Phaedrus as beloved to lover in some fashion, as Socrates repeatedly suggests, then we should consider to what extent love has an effect on either Lysias or Phaedrus. When we, alongside Socrates, meet Phaedrus, he is bewitched by the subtlety and cleverness (*kekompseutai*; 227c) of Lysias’s speech.⁶⁴ He’s spent his whole morning at Lysias’s

specifically, the “love between men of the same age (usually adolescent and young adults) was increasingly common, and reciprocal sexual gratification no longer socially scorned” (*Phaedrus*, xi).

⁶² Note that the clause in which Lysias speaks of mutual benefit is the final clause in the speech proper (excluding his final remark where he addresses the auditor directly).

⁶³ Recall the discussion of how reciprocity and equality are features of the love-relationship which come to be on account of the lover’s reconnection to the divine in §4 of the prior chapter.

⁶⁴ We might take the fact that Phaedrus is particularly entranced by Lysias’s *speech* to indicate that Phaedrus is only a lover of Lysias’s speech—Socrates identifies Phaedrus as *tou tōn lōgon erastou*, after all (228c)—and not of Lysias himself, as Socrates had thought. Phaedrus’s concern for Lysias’s reputation (257c) and Phaedrus’s defensiveness about Lysias’s merits (234b, 235b) seem to indicate that Phaedrus does indeed have affection and care for the speech-writer too, ambiguous as that affection and care might be (recall that the wolf has *agapē* for the lamb, after all; *agapōsin*, 241d). Additionally, anticipating what we’ll discuss in our concluding chapter, we can say that love for Lysias’s speech may entail love for

side (227a) being “feasted” (*heistia*; 227b) upon Lysias’s speeches. He plans to go to the “city’s covered colonnades” (*dromois*; 227b), ostensibly for a rest from his morning’s labors, as the doctor, Akoumenos, advises (227a). As Socrates surmises, Phaedrus spent the morning commanding (*ekelēuen*) Lysias to repeat his speech over and over again (*pollakis*) so that Phaedrus might memorize it (228a); not being content with verbal repetition, Phaedrus borrows the speech and hides it in his left hand under his cloak (228b, e) in order to practice performing it (228e). As Scully notes, the colonnades were “a favorite haunt for young men to congregate,”⁶⁵ and so we might suspect that Phaedrus’s choice to go to the colonnades was not simply salutary, as he claims. Socrates indicates as much when he says that Phaedrus found in Socrates a suitable target, since Socrates is also “sick with desire for speeches” and a fellow enthusiast of love matters (227c, 228b). When Phaedrus delivers the speech, he seemed, according to Socrates, “lit up” (*ganusthai*) and “caught up in a Bacchic frenzy” (*sunebachkeusa*; 234d; cf. 228b).

5. Phaedrus’s bewitchment leads to a number of effects that are consistent with the anti-erotic speeches’ disparagement of love. Like the humanly-mad lover, Phaedrus is inclined to bestow on Lysias “inappropriate and overblown praises” (240e): Phaedrus raves about Lysias’s refinement (227c; cf. 235b) and cleverness (*deinotatos*; 228a) and concludes his recital of the speech with a rhapsodizing comment about its “supernatural” (*hyperphuōs*; 234c) qualities.⁶⁶ Socrates reveals the inappropriateness of Phaedrus’s acclaim by showing that the

Lysias when the speech is properly conceived as an iconic image of that which is written into the soul of the speaker. Phaedrus may be running the risk of making Lysias’s speech an idol, but Socrates implicitly suggests that the speech is, in truth, an icon (albeit, a false one), for he claims that Lysias is “present” (*parontos*; 228e), in his speech, just as Beauty is present in all beauties.

⁶⁵ Scully, *Phaedrus*, 1, note 3.

⁶⁶ This point hinges on the presumption that what Phaedrus here says to Socrates of Lysias resembles what he would have been saying to Lysias himself in the morning; given that we have no account of their morningtide conversation, the point remains speculative. Likewise, since we don’t have any direct

two anti-erotic speeches fell into irreverence and blasphemy (242d-243a), since they jointly slandered the god Eros by denying his godhood and his beneficence.⁶⁷ Later, Socrates reveals that Phaedrus's praise is not merely overblown, but false, for Lysias's rhetoric in this speech is artless (cf. 235a, 263d-264e).⁶⁸

6. Phaedrus is initially hostile to these criticisms; indeed, he seems to be hostile to the very idea of his beloved being criticized at all (cf. 234d, 235b, 236b), so much so that Socrates drops his renewed analysis of Lysias's speech's faults on account of Phaedrus's complaint that Socrates is mocking it (*skōpteis*, 264e). Phaedrus's defensiveness has an agonistic quality to it: Phaedrus goads Socrates into trying (*per impossibile*, as Phaedrus thinks) to "outdo" Lysias (235b-236b, 237a; cf. 243e); after Socrates's second speech, Phaedrus expresses some reservation that Socrates has indeed outperformed Lysias and immediately changes the subject (257c). In Phaedrus's defensiveness, we see glimmers of the humanly-sick lover's jealousy

information about Lysias before or after the dialogue's drama (except that Lysias had been feasting Phaedrus on *logoi*), any articulation of Lysias's pre-dialogical and post-dialogical statuses, and the possible effects of Phaedrus's love on him, would have to be speculative. It is plausible that the negative effects of love on the beloved discussed in the anti-erotic speeches would occur to some extent in Lysias, for Phaedrus's overblown praise and fawning might lead Lysias to develop an exaggerated perception of his own beauty (particularly, as expressed in his speech-writing capacity); if Phaedrus hasn't been reoriented, we can imagine him preventing Lysias from an encounter with "divine philosophy" (239b) by refusing to tell Lysias what took place at the grove. Alternatively, if Phaedrus has been reoriented (as we claim) and obeys Socrates's command to go to Lysias and report what he's heard, then we can imagine a Lysias presented with the opportunity to be reformed under Phaedrus's loving guidance.

⁶⁷ It should be recalled that Plato's original audience would have firmly in mind the details of the historical Phaedrus's alleged participation in the "profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries" and the "mutilation of the Herms." The details of both acts of impiety are somewhat obscure, and commentators disagree to what extent Phaedrus was involved in either act. Nails, for example, takes Phaedrus to have only partaken in the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries (*The People of Plato*, 232-234); more recently, Marshall Bradley has argued that Phaedrus was implicated in both acts of impiety, and that "Plato himself is actually the best source by which to infer that Phaedrus was involved in both scandals" (*Who is Phaedrus? Keys to Plato's Dyad Masterpiece*, [Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012], xvii-xviii).

⁶⁸ At *Lysis* 205d-206b, Socrates criticizes Hippothales's "manic" (cf. 205a) love-poems in praise of Lysis for being presumptuously self-congratulating. The praises, Socrates claims, are directed more to Hippothales as the (would-be) possessor of Lysis than to Lysis himself, but given that Hippothales has not yet "captured" Lysis, he runs the risk of "scar[ing] away his prey." These love-poems, Socrates claims, lead to self-harm. At 210e, Socrates thinks to himself that one would better capture one's beloved by deflating his self-perception than by "puffing him up."

(*phthonos*, *phthonein*, *phthoneros*; cf. 232d, 239b, 240a, 241c), for Phaedrus is (initially, at least)⁶⁹ unwilling to be parted from his perceptions of Lysias’s formidable rhetorical prowess. If Socrates were to convince Phaedrus of Lysias’s faults, Phaedrus would be forced to come to the uncomfortable realization that Lysias is not the man Phaedrus thought him to be; this would be akin to Lysias being taken away from him, which is something Phaedrus can’t presently countenance. We also see a certain envy in Phaedrus in his self-reflective admission that he’d rather have Lysias’s rhetorical skill “than piles of gold” (228a). As we saw above, the Palinode explains that “Envy (*phthonos*) stands outside the space of the divine dance” (247a); likewise, the divinely-mad lover will serve the beloved “without envy (*phthonōi*) or stingy ill-will (*aneleutherōi dsmeneiai*)” (253b).⁷⁰

7. Further, Phaedrus seems prone to an inordinate desire for pleasure, especially when it comes to speeches, and inordinate desire for pleasure seems to be, as we discussed before, the primary fault of humanly-sick lovers. When Socrates’s recognizes his guilt in blaspheming Eros, he tells Phaedrus that he needs to purify himself, as Stesichorus had done, by means of a Palinode. Phaedrus’s response—“There could be no words sweeter (*hēdiō*) to my ears than these, Socrates” (243b)—seems to ignore Socrates’s precarious position on account of the promise of further gratification for his speech-lust. We have already seen this speech-lust before when Phaedrus was “delighted” (*hēsthē*) that he found in Socrates a fellow Bacchic

⁶⁹ Over the course of the post-Palinode section of the text, Phaedrus appears to be more open to Socrates’s criticisms of Lysias (264e notwithstanding). See, e.g., 263e, where Phaedrus admits that something that should be present in Lysias’s speech is absent. If Phaedrus intends to follow Socrates’s advice to deliver a report to Lysias of the day’s events, then we have warrant to assume that he is sufficiently convinced that Lysias needs to rethink his speech, both for its form and for its content.

⁷⁰ Note that *phthonos* and its lexical cousins can be used either for jealousy (that passion whereby one wants to guard against the loss of what one already has) or for envy (that passion whereby one resents not having what another has). The gods, and those lovers who make themselves like unto the gods by taking on their ways and customs, are neither jealous (for what, indeed, could take away their perfect happiness?) nor envious (for what goods could they lack in their self-sufficiency?).

reveler, sick with desire for speeches (228b). Phaedrus reiterates his speech-lust shortly after Socrates concludes the Palinode; asked whether they should examine Lysias and other speech-writers concerning how to write well, Phaedrus responds by asking “What would anyone possibly live for—so to speak—if not for such pleasures (*hēdonōn*)?” (258e).⁷¹

8. While Phaedrus is right to note that there are genuine pleasures involved in speeches⁷² (and Phaedrus even gives a useful criterion for distinguishing between higher-order and lower-order pleasures at 258e), Socrates’s choice to introduce the myth of the Cicadas immediately after Phaedrus finishes his brief eulogy highlights that there is something wrong with Phaedrus’s valuation of this pleasure, for the myth is (at least in part) a *warning* against being swept away by the pleasures of *logos*.⁷³ The Cicadas came about from a group of human beings who were “so dumbstruck with pleasure (*hēdonēs*)” upon the birth of the Muses “that

⁷¹ When the pair review the speeches, Phaedrus responds to Socrates’s appraisal of the Palinode by saying “And, for me, certainly not unpleasant (*ouk aēdōs*) to the ear” (265c; recalling the stream being *ouk aēdes* at 229a). Recall Socrates’s remark in the interlude between his two speeches: “You’re truly divine when it comes to speeches, Phaedrus, simply astonishing. Of all the speeches that have been made during your lifetime, I’d say no one has produced more of them than you” (242a-b; cf. *Symposium* 177d).

⁷² Cf. 276d, where Socrates talks about the philosophical writer’s taking-pleasure (*hēsthēsetai*) in watching the seeds she’s planted in the fertile soil of young souls grow.

⁷³ See Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 73: “Socrates seems compelled to introduce his digression [about the Cicadas] precisely because Phaedrus so eagerly betrays his understanding of speech as the highest pleasure in life, surpassing, simply by its freedom from pain, the pleasures of the body. Socrates must transform Phaedrus’s unqualified appreciation of speech in and of itself—an appreciation apparently unaltered by the beautiful speech just delivered—before they can pursue the discussion of writing. [...] The story Socrates relates describes the slavery of these sirens themselves as the price paid for their love of the pleasure of song.” See also Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, Ch. 1, esp. 27ff. Along these lines, Zwicky gives a “darker” reading of the Cicadas as having a political backdrop: Socrates is dead because he kept singing and conversing (“Dialogue With the Dead,” 23). The myth of the Cicadas is not *simply* a warning, however, for it also promises a great gift to those who navigate the treacherous, Siren-laden seas by paying attention and not falling asleep. See Sweeney, “Pedagogical Settings,” 101-102. See also Gottfried, “Pan, the Cicadas, and Plato’s Use of Myth,” 180: “The most obvious difficulty with [a reading which *only* takes the myth of the Cicadas to be a warning] is that it contradicts Socrates’ assertion at 242e that divine beings (which the Muses certainly are) cannot be evil.” In general, the “Cicadas as warning” reading should be counter-balanced by the readings of Sweeney and Gottfried, though I don’t think the “positive” (Sweeney, Gottfried) and “negative” (Ferrari, Griswold) readings are incompatible, given the “pharmacological” character of the cicadas. Rather, the negative readings are accurate, but *inadequate*, when not accompanied by the positive reevaluation. See Gottfried, 190, 192, for how to address the truth of the negative side without losing sight of the greater importance of the positive side.

they just sang, actually taking no interest in food or drink, and they died before they knew what happened” (259c). As Socrates indicates, Phaedrus’s uncritical *philologia* (love of words) must be tempered if the pair want to sail safely past these “Sirens unbewitched” and receive the “gift of honor which they have from the gods to give to human beings” (259b). The remainder of the dialogue is an attempt to work through what differentiates beautiful *logos*, in all its forms, from poorly-crafted *logos*; in other words, the remainder of the dialogue tries to redirect Phaedrus’s love of words *simpliciter* to a love of *beautiful* words (cf. *kalōs* at 258d and 259e), beautiful words which are such because they manifest *truth* (260e).

9. From out of Phaedrus’s inordinate desire for the pleasure to be found in *logoi* comes one last feature of love, according to the anti-erotic account, that shows up in Phaedrus: force. At the beginning of his anti-erotic speech, Socrates defines love as a form of desire ordered to pleasure, which occurs when pleasure “drags and rules over us” (238a) so that we are “driven (*achtheisa*) toward the pleasure of beauty” (238c). “When this passion is violently moved by kindred desires toward the beauty of the body and is victorious (*errōmenōs rhōstheisa nikēsasa agōgei*), it takes its name from that very force (*rhōmēs*) and is called love (*erōs*)” (238c). Phaedrus is clearly such as to be dragged toward force, even violence, in pursuit of his desire for the pleasure that attends *logoi*,⁷⁴ and he admires the rhetoric art precisely because of its “very great force” (*mala errōmenēn*; 268a). He threatens to force Socrates to speak with the strength of his

⁷⁴ Sweeney notes “the implicit violence of Phaedrus’ worldview” that comes out of Phaedrus’s urbanity: “Phaedrus thinks only within the city; he is confined by the logic of the city’s economics and politics. What does he find in the plane tree? A resource to be used inasmuch as it has utility. Consider in turn the following expressions in Lysias’s speech that Phaedrus so admires: balance sheet, interests, adds up, fair return, business, a tab, benefits received, detract from value, favors for those who can return, and the addition of value. Lysias, the courter, says: I have something (power, position, technical knowledge, and money) and I will give it to you as a trade for what you have (sex)” (“Pedagogical Settings,” 97-98). Hyland detects an overinflated concern for utility in Phaedrus’s speech in the *Symposium (Question of Beauty, 29-30)*. If so, Phaedrus is well-primed for Lysianic seduction; part of Socrates’s reorientation of Phaedrus will be to show Phaedrus the value of leisure and freedom (*eleutheria*) whereby Phaedrus will be able to see love, language, and even reality itself for what each is (cf. 243c; Sweeney, “Pedagogical Settings,” 98).

body (236c-d; cf. 228c) and ultimately uses Socrates's own words and desires against him to force Socrates to speak (236d-e). Socrates himself threatens to leave halfway through his speech before Phaedrus "forces" him to say anything more (242a).⁷⁵ Socrates also claims that Phaedrus forced him into whatever poetic excess he may have fallen (257a).

10. Though the last few paragraphs may seem to paint a thoroughly nasty picture of Phaedrus's character, that is not my purpose. Instead, our goal is to note that a number of the dramatic details seem to confirm that love can have the effects of which the anti-erotic speeches speak. But note: the anti-erotic speeches only describe a love that has not been "enthused" (*en-theos*, to have a god within), and Phaedrus, I claim, is given the opportunity to "make contact with a god through memory" (253a) over the course of the dialogue (albeit, mediately, as we'll discuss below).

11. The three most significant dramatic moments of the dialogue—the beginning, the middle, and the end—paint a picture of Phaedrus's shifting moral and intellectual landscape. When Socrates first meets Phaedrus, Phaedrus has been steeped in Lysianic rhetoric and can think about nothing except the power and cleverness of speeches. Socrates and Phaedrus depart from the city as unequals, alternately leading each other in an erotic game wherein the roles switch back and forth. At the end of the Palinode, shortly after the dialogue's center-

⁷⁵ In addition to these points, note that Phaedrus brings up the story of Boreas's abduction of Oreithua, a story of a lover using force on his beloved (229b); note that he asks after its truth three times in quick succession ("Isn't it around here?" "Is it around here?" "Do you think this myth is true?"). Further, we might note that Phaedrus's choice to abandon his walk along the *dromoi*, wherein he may have been hunting for a suitable youth upon whom he could practice his speech, in favor of practicing the speech on Socrates is consistent with Socrates's anti-erotic claim that the lover, enslaved to pleasure as he is, "contrives [...] to reap the greatest possible pleasure for himself from the beloved. For a sick man, anything that offers little or no resistance is sweet, and anything that is equal or stronger is hateful" (238e-239a). As we've just seen, Phaedrus is younger and stronger than Socrates (236d), and Phaedrus knows that Socrates's love of speeches will make him an easy, non-resistant target.

point, Socrates prays to Eros to turn Lysias “toward a love of wisdom [...] so that his lover here, Phaedrus, may also stop going in two directions (*epamphoterizēi*) as now, but devote his life solely to Love with wisdom-loving speeches” (257b).⁷⁶ By the end of the dialogue Phaedrus joins Socrates in making two prayers: to be such a sort as to believe that written speeches can never “be taken too seriously,” for “there is necessarily much playfulness” (277e), and to “become beautiful within” and that his “worldly belongings be in accord with” his inner self (279b-c).⁷⁷ If Phaedrus is earnest in his *con*-fession, we have reason to think that Socrates’s prayer to Eros has begun to bear fruit, for Phaedrus’s simple speech-lust has been tempered (he prays not to take speeches “too seriously”) and he seems to have resolved his ambivalence.⁷⁸ Phaedrus departs with Socrates as equals in their mutual orientation to wisdom, inner beauty, and moderation, for “friends have things in common” (279c).⁷⁹ Rather than

⁷⁶ This remark further heightens the ambiguity of Phaedrus’s relationship with Lysias, for ordinarily, it is the lover who is supposed to educate the beloved.

⁷⁷ By contrast, Lavilla de Lera takes each of the prayers to be unserious and ironical, intended to put Phaedrus (and the reader) to the test rather than to actually petition the gods for their gracious gifts (“Prayer to Pan,” 71-72). Part of Lavilla de Lera’s justification is that “the reader must understand that philosophy cannot be equated with a passive attitude; it cannot consist of asking someone for gifts. [...] Philosophy is a virtue, which is necessarily earned through effort and constancy but never acquired as a gift.” While there is a consistent logic to this ironical secularization of the *Phaedrus*, which implicitly closes itself off from the *possibility* of receiving a gratuitous gift insofar as it denies, in advance, that philosophy can have anything to do with a gift, it is, I think, not only contrary to, but contradictory to, the spirit and meaning of the text (as the English subtitle to Pieper’s *“Divine Madness:” Plato’s Case Against Secular Humanism*, trans. Lothar Krauth [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995] attests). While Lavilla de Lera is right to think that Phaedrus’s tendency toward passivity is incompatible with philosophy, since philosophy is an active engagement with the thing to be thought, Lavilla de Lera goes astray by failing to distinguish *passivity* from *receptivity* (as discussed in the previous chapter). Receptivity is an active condition rather than a passive condition, and it requires the agent’s willing consent as well as the agent’s work to become apt to receive. One is passive when hit by a falling rock; one is receptive when one *receives* a gift, and the communication of the gift from the giver to the receiver is characterized by the adequacy not only of the givenness of the gift by the giver, but also by the receptivity of the receiver. A gift cannot be passively absorbed but must be actively received (though, again, the quality of the reception can vary dramatically). See also Pieper’s discussion of the advent of understanding the acts of the intellect specifically as “intellectual work” (*Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009], 26ff).

⁷⁸ D. White suggests that we see the Palinode have a good effect on Phaedrus’s character (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 59-60); Yunis claims that Phaedrus has in the end been convinced by Socrates (*Phaedrus*, 3-4).

⁷⁹ At *Lysis* 221e-222d, Socrates suggest that the deeper meaning of this kind of claim (that friends have all things in common) is because friends are “akin” (*oikeios*) to each other rather than merely being “alike”

continue to playact seduction and continue to petition each other to lead the way, they depart together; they are the common subject of an intransitive verb (*iōmen*, 279c) which doesn't require a distinction between an agent and a patient, as leading and following do.

12. There are two principal reasons one might object to my suggestion that Phaedrus has undergone a significant conversion. First, the historical Phaedrus went astray; rather than devoting himself to Love and wisdom-loving speeches, he engaged in blasphemous acts and subsequently fled into exile. While this is certainly the background against which Plato's original audience would have received this text (especially insofar as one of the most plausible dramatic dates is immediately before the profanation of the Eleusian mysteries in 415),⁸⁰ there is no reason to suppose that Plato sticks rigorously to history, even if all (or nearly all) of his characters and settings are firmly historically grounded.⁸¹ Plato, as Aristotle would say, is doing *poetics*, not *history*, and poetics speaks about "what sort would come to be" rather than what merely "has come to be," for poetics is "more philosophic" than history on account of dealing with what's necessary rather than what's merely factual or likely (*Poetics* 9.1451a-b).⁸² As a good friend aptly characterized Platonic characterization, "for Plato, character traits are not just personal. They are metaphysically grounded. Who you are in your person reveals how you

(*homoios*). Friends don't just happen to share common traits, but, instead, are jointly akin to each other *because* "what is good is akin to everyone." We become akin to each other by (jointly) pursuing that which is *proper* to us (*oikeios*, in another sense), that in which we are *at home* (*oikeios*, in a third sense), which would be, in the language of the *Lysis*, the "first friend" (*proton philon*), for the sake of which we hold dear (*philos*) all the things which we hold dear. See 219c-220b. The dialogue's aporetic ending is occasioned by the boys' misstep in accepting a previously dismissed interpretation of "like to like" as meaning that good is akin to good *and* bad is akin to bad (222c), as Socrates notes (222d: "And so, boys, we have fallen back into those accounts concerning friendship which we rejected at first").

⁸⁰ See Nails, *The People of Plato*, 232-233. Yunis suggests that there is a fictionalized imprecision in the dramatic date (*Phaedrus*, 8).

⁸¹ As the anonymous *Prolegomena* attest; see section v.

⁸² Aristotle, *On Poetics*, trans. Seth Benardete and Michael Davis (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002).

understand the very ground of reality.”⁸³ Plato is interested less in contingent historical facts about the people whom he refashions into characters for his philosophical dramas (whom he makes, perhaps, like Socrates, “young and beautiful;” II.314c) than in the necessities and possibilities that arises from being a certain way.

13. As Socrates’s prayer to Eros indicates, Phaedrus is at a crossroads. The historical Phaedrus seems to have gone one way, but Plato’s literary Phaedrus is given the opportunity to go another way, in an act of “literary salvation.”⁸⁴ Whether the literary Phaedrus takes up the opportunity is not something that we can know. Does he do as Socrates has commanded? Does his divinely-inspired soul-leader’s message get written into his soul, passing from Socrates to Phaedrus like the “leaping spark” of the *Seventh Letter*? Or does Phaedrus instead turn aside to return to his original destination, the *dromoi*, wherein he’ll continue seeking after speeches and non-resistant audiences whom he can overpower by means of those speeches? We don’t know. However, by omitting any indication of the literary Phaedrus’s ultimate whither, Plato subtly shifts the meaning of the departure scene: Phaedrus’s ultimate whither is not, in fact, our concern, for now *we* must determine what *we* will do, *whither* we will go, and whether we can harmonize our souls so as to become something “simpler, more divine,” or whether we will give in to our Typhonian impulses and become tyrannized by some form of desire (or, perhaps, alternatively, become so terrified of the possibility of tyrannical desire that we forswear desire altogether and thus lead-through a life of “slavish economizing”).⁸⁵

⁸³ Robert Duffy, “Do We Need the True?” (lecture given at Villanova University; spring 2020). Similarly, see McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 25, 35.

⁸⁴ Cf. the [pseudo?]-Platonic *Epigrams*, 4. Nussbaum also suggests that there is a kind of literary salvation for Phaedrus (see *Fragility*, 212). See also Ewegen, “Where Have All the Shepherds Gone,” 54-57 for an analysis of the results of leaving Socrates prematurely.

⁸⁵ Pickstock has noted a similar point: by reversing the temporal order of the question *poi de kai pothen*—that is, by saying “to where and from where” rather than the temporally more apt “from where and to

14. Second, one might object to a positive reading of Phaedrus's Socratic conversion on account of Phaedrus's incorrigible passivity. Does Phaedrus actually make progress in the dialogue, or does he remain a mere "yes-man," inflamed by pretty words rather than by truth, beauty, and wisdom? It's worth reiterating Hyland's impression that Phaedrus was "stunningly—one might say appallingly—unmoved by [the Palinode's] content." While there might be grounds in the dialogue for arguing that Phaedrus shows some progress, especially after the Palinode,⁸⁶ the point I want to make here prescinds, to a certain extent, from analyzing the particular Phaedrean responses, for *if* Phaedrus has made progress in his eponymous dialogue, he has made progress *in the way in which* the Palinode's beloved has. Though Phaedrus is Lysias's lover, the Phaedrean-Lysian relationship seems to be a humanly-sick love relationship (unless and until it receives some divine care). But Phaedrus is not only Lysias's lover in this dialogue; he is also Socrates's beloved. And it is as Socrates's beloved that Phaedrus makes improvement. Since Phaedrus is the *beloved* in the relevant relationship for transformation, we should expect that his progress is more incipient, more confused, for he only experiences divine love as an "echo" and "image" of love (cf. 255d). Accordingly, if the Socratean-Phaedrean relationship is the one which dramatizes Palinodic love (as opposed to the Phaedrean-Lysian relationship, which dramatizes that human love chastised by the anti-

where"—Socrates prepares for a new ontology of "pilgrimage" in place of the old ontology of "lineage" (*After Writing*, 45).

⁸⁶ For example, one could use Phaedrus's remark at 261a—"We must hear these arguments, Socrates. Lead them out (*paragōn*) so we can review what they say and how they say it"—to indicate that Phaedrus has indeed gotten interested in analyzing philosophical content (in this case, the truth about rhetoric's need for truth). Additionally, one could take Phaedrus's desire for a reminder at 277b not as an unphilosophical lapse of memory, but instead as a philosophical desire to *remember*, to have the insight brought back to mind. Though the *Republic* does suggest that the natural gift of a good memory is required for the philosopher, it seems more plausible to say that the *desire* to keep the truth in mind, faithfully, is what's actually required. While having suitable natural gifts is certainly useful for becoming a philosopher, it is not sufficient for doing so (and can, when wrongly turned, be a great hindrance). Being a philosopher is *a way of life* structured by a specific metaphysical vision and a certain orientation toward reality. As such, acquired fidelity is more relevant to the philosophical life than the gifts of nature.

erotic speeches), then it is to *Socrates* that we must look for the full view of love's transformative effects in the drama of the *Phaedrus*. In keeping with the final point of the prior paragraph, we can say here likewise that whether or not Phaedrus does make progress as a beloved is ultimately unimportant compared to whether or not we do, for there is no reason not to take Socrates's eulogy to Eros as addressed also to *us*.

15. Before turning to Socrates's dramatic transformation, it is worth noting that the dialogue does indicate that Phaedrus has been, however incipiently, set upon the right path. He leaves with Socrates, under the aegis of a common prayer, with the specific goal of helping his beloved, Lysias, become philosophical also. Phaedrus is specifically commanded by Socrates to inform Lysias of the conditions for becoming a philosophical speech-writer (278b-d, 279b). If so, we have a profound confirmation of an insight we've already articulated (see Chapter 3 above): soul-leading, *psuchagogia*, is a *transitive* relationship in principle. If the gods *are* divine by their proximity to the superheavenly things (249c), then we partake of the gods' divinity by our proximity to them, which is accomplished by following them. As we saw above, a beloved is made like unto the god he had followed by his lover, who *mediates* the beloved's relationship with his god. To the extent that a lover loves well, he is brought near to the god he followed ("made contact through memory"); to the extent that a beloved begins to experience return-love, he is also brought near to the god he followed. If the beloved is formed by way of the lover's formation, there's no reason that today's beloved can't be tomorrow's lover who imposes form on tomorrow's beloved. This is *exactly* what the dialogue indicates will happen in its conclusion: Lysias will be reformed by means of Phaedrus, who was reformed by means of Socrates, who (as we shall in a moment see) was reformed by means of

his recollection of the divine.⁸⁷ Just as the god leads the lover, who in turn leads the beloved, so Socrates leads Phaedrus (and Isocrates!), who in turn leads Lysias.⁸⁸

§4. Love's Ambiguous Effects on Socrates

1. Just as Phaedrus's and Lysias's love-relationship revealed itself to be profoundly ambiguous, so also does that of Phaedrus and Socrates, but the ambiguity this time is of a different kind. Unlike in the former relationship, wherein it was unclear who was lover and who beloved, Socrates and Phaedrus are, aside from one possible exception, consistently cast as lover (Socrates) and beloved (Phaedrus).⁸⁹ This casting can be seen in Socrates's repeated vocative addresses to Phaedrus; these addresses imply that Socrates stands to Phaedrus as lover to beloved (consider especially, *pais*, the common word used to refer to the beloved "boy" in the pederastic relationship at 267c).⁹⁰ Phaedrus is happy to play along. But, as Gordon

⁸⁷ The *Phaedrus* thus shows itself to parallel the *Ion* not just in the supposition that the best poets are divinely mad, but also in the supposition that divine madness is, in a certain sense, *communicable* through a kind of transitivity (as the image of the magnetic stone indicates). If love is a "sickness," as Lysias and Socrates (initially) suggest (236b), it is a sickness well worth catching, so long as it is divinely inspired.

⁸⁸ As we suggested with respect to the historical Phaedrus, so we likewise suggest with respect to the historical Lysias and Isocrates. All three seem to have chosen against the Socratic-Platonic philosophical life, but the dialogue presents an opportunity for each to receive a "literary salvation." The sending-off scene is divisive among scholarship (reflective of the split on Phaedrus's character and his prospects for being reformed). Griswold, for example, suggests that when Socrates sends Phaedrus back to the *polis*, it is to convey a politically accessible teaching that omits all the metaphysical content (*Self-Knowledge*, 27), presumably because a. Griswold is unconvinced that Socrates himself upholds the metaphysical content, and b. even if Socrates did uphold the metaphysical content, Griswold takes Phaedrus himself to be inadequate to the job. By contrast, D. White rightly claims that by charging Phaedrus to spread the divine message to Lysias, Socrates implies that Phaedrus not only understood but can defend the message's content (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 269); in other words, the message has been written into Phaedrus's soul.

⁸⁹ When Phaedrus tries to convince Socrates to make a speech in competition with Lysias, he says "We're alone here in a deserted place, and I'm stronger than you—and younger. For all these reasons, 'take my meaning,' and don't wait to be coerced, but speak voluntarily" (236c-d). As Lavilla de Lera has noted, Phaedrus's remark "could be understood that he threatens Socrates with rape if he does not agree to give him pleasure by offering a competing speech" ("Prayer to Pan," 76); see note 31 above. While this would constitute an erotic role-reversal akin to what we saw in the Lysian-Phaedrean relationship, this text is aimed more directly at Phaedrus's willingness to use violence and force because he's in the grips of a humanly-sick love of speeches, in accordance with the anti-erotic speeches' account of humanly-sick love.

⁹⁰ See also 228d (*philotēs*) and 261a (*kallipais*); if we take Socrates's speeches to be addressed to Phaedrus (as, e.g., Hemias does at *Scholia* 54.5), we also see Socrates refer to Phaedrus using language

has noted, the *Phaedrus*'s prologue dramatizes an erotic relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus with some questionable, perhaps even sinister, undertones by its repeated use of *proagein* (to lead forward),⁹¹ for *proagein* and its lexical cousins denote all sorts of sexually devious activities, such as pimping, pandering, and procuring sexual objects.⁹²

2. Socrates describes himself as “sick (*nosounti*) with desire just to hear speeches” (228b), and when he says shortly thereafter that he is a lover (*erastou*) of speeches (228c), we are (retrospectively) invited to understand that Socrates is a humanly-sick lover, as discussed in his anti-erotic speech. On account of Phaedrus’s epitome of Lysias’s speech, Socrates says that he’s “built up such a desire (*epitethumēka*) to hear his words that if you [Phaedrus] were to walk all the way to Megara—as far as its wall and back again (as the good doctor Herodikos prescribes), *I wouldn’t leave your side for all the world*” (227d; emphasis added).⁹³ Phaedrus, Socrates claims, has “discovered a drug (*to pharmakon heurēkenai*)” for luring him out of the city (230d): “Just like dangling green branches or fruit of some kind in front of a hungry animal to lead him on (*agousin*), so you are likely to lead me through (*periaxein*) all of Attica or anywhere you

characteristically used of the beloved at 237b (*pais*), 241c (*pais*), 243e (*pais*), 244a (*kalos pais*), and 256e (*pais*). Phaedrus’s response to Socrates’s question at 243e (“Where’s the boy with whom I was just speaking?”) seems to indicate that Phaedrus is accepting being identified with the addressed boy (“That boy’s right here, always right by your side whenever you want him”). Socrates does seem genuinely interested in Phaedrus, in a manner consistent with the Palinode’s revision of the pederastic relationship, insofar as he claims that he considers hearing how Phaedrus spent his time with Lysias “more important than business itself” (227b). He wants to know how Phaedrus has been spending his time since he cares for Phaedrus’s well-being, regardless of how much he gets distracted by Lysias’s speech (or, at least, pretends to get distracted thus).

⁹¹ See Gordon’s discussion of the *Phaedrus*'s prologue’s use of the surprising frequency of leading-language in *Plato’s Erotic World*, 166-174, especially her discussion of the “cruder, comedic play on words” (168). The “cruder, comedic” side of Plato’s word-choice is meant to be heard in one register initially, but is transformed over the course of the dialogue. See Ch. 4, §2.1 for Asmis’s analogous claims about soul-leading (*psuchagōgia*), as well as Ch. 4, §3.2 for my general characterization of the “pharmacological” elements of the *Phaedrus*.

⁹² See also *ibid.*, 130-145 for a discussion of Socrates’s “pimping” activity in the *Theaetetus* and in Xenophon, which is expressed using a different set of similarly ambiguous terms.

⁹³ The distance between Athens and Megara is about the same as the distance between Athens and Marathon, and so, as we know, this is no meager peregrination!

want, simply by holding words in a book in front of my nose” (230d-e). Two things should be noted here: first, Socrates appears to be inclined to the “lupine excess” referenced at the end of his anti-erotic speech (see 241d; see Chapter 2), for he is following Phaedrus on account of a desire to consume the “food” Phaedrus holds before him. Second, we see that Phaedrus himself appears to be being followed *merely* as a means, for Socrates does not want Phaedrus, but instead, the speech. Before we take Socrates to be, like Phaedrus, in the grips of a humanly-sick love, we should recall (from our analysis in §3.2 of the previous chapter) that the divinely-mad lover’s love-sick actions are similarly characterized *before* the lover makes contact with the god she followed in memory. From the perspective of the Palinode, we see that Socrates is beset by the monomaniacal, idolatrous love of the *unformed* divinely-mad lover.⁹⁴

3. The way Socrates behaves in the time between the *Phaedrus*’s prologue and the conclusion of the Palinode resembles the Palinode lover’s transformation by love (with some added complexity). Our first cue is Socrates’s remark after Phaedrus concludes his recital of Lysias’s speech:

Indeed, divinely spirited (*daimonios*), my dear companion; naturally I’m stunned (*ekplagenai*). And this I suffered (*epathon*) through you, Phaedrus, because while I was looking at you reading, you seemed lit up (*ganusthai*) by the speech. Being led to think (*hegoumenos*) that you perceived such matters better than I, I followed (*heipomen*) you, and following (*hepomenos*), I was caught up in a Bacchic frenzy with (*sunebakechusa*) you, a divine source (*tes theias kephales*). (234d; translation modified)

While Socrates’s remark has a deeply dissembling tone (especially insofar as we’ll soon hear that Socrates wasn’t paying attention to the speech’s content, but only its rhetoric, and, as

⁹⁴ We should also note that the remark from 230d-e just mentioned changes significance after we’ve read the Palinode, for the humanly-mad lover’s “lupine” hunger is replaced with a non-consumptive nourishment when the soul is directed toward “really real reality” (cf. 247d-e); likewise, instead of being led-around all of Attica by the promise of an urbane (and ultimately blasphemous) speech, the Palinode presents the soul as being led-around (*periagei*; 247c) the periphery of heaven so that the soul can get a circumscriptive view of the superheavenly forms. *Periagein*, an important word in the *Republic* (see, 518c, et al.), appears only twice in the *Phaedrus*, and the parallelism invites comparison.

Socrates judges, even the rhetoric left something to be desired; cf. 234e-235a), I suggest that this dissembling is not the whole story, for Socrates uses language that anticipates the Palinode's language of the effect of the beloved's *beauty* on the lover.⁹⁵ Socrates is affected (*epathōn*) by Phaedrus's "brightness" (*ganusthai*)—Phaedrus's *Phaedrusness*, one might say⁹⁶—and the effect is to "shock" him, to "drive him out of his senses" (*ekplagēnai*; from *ekplatō*). On account of this, Socrates is willing to do whatever Phaedrus desires (namely, deliver a blasphemous speech) in order to gratify his beloved (cf. 252a). Socrates also anticipates the divine madness of which he'll speak by identifying himself as a fellow Bacchic reveler, sharing an inspiration by Dionysus, the god who will oversee telestic mania (265b), which purifies ancient blood-guilts and initiates the recipient into the mysteries (244d-e). Finally, the language of following (*hepasthai*) anticipates both the mythological depiction of the souls following (*hepasthai*, 247a) Zeus, the great leader (*ho megas hēgemōn*, 246e), in their journey to the Plain of Truth, as well as the dialectician, who "has the capacity to see into a single thing and to see the natural outgrowth from a single thing toward many things" (i.e., who can collect [*sunagōgē*] and

⁹⁵ This, then, is an example of the alternative account of literary irony I suggested in Chapter 3. The irony is not primarily meant to discriminate audiences, but, instead, is meant to instruct the audience about how not to misunderstand the matter at hand by allowing the interlocutor to lead the conversation down various byroads. Phaedrus only hears the dissembling (indicated by his responses at 234d-e), because, unlike the reader, Phaedrus can't revisit this passage from the perspective of the later discussion in the Palinode. The reader, by contrast, might be inclined to agree with Phaedrus upon a first pass, but, upon revisiting this passage *in light of the whole* (which is a criterion for understanding the part, as 270c indicates), the reader can come to the realization missed by Phaedrus, namely, that the divine is truly at work here (as we'll discuss in Chapter 6).

⁹⁶ *Phaidros* is basically synonymous with *ganos*, the lexical cousin of *ganusthai*; both mean brightness and cheerfulness, particularly in terms of their *radiant* qualities (cheerfulness is *infectious* because it radiates out from the cheerful one, who is, contrary to any act of will, unable to contain her joy). By punning on Phaedrus's name here with the synonym rather than with the etymologically related *phainesthai* or another synonym like *lampros*, Socrates prepares us for his later allusion to the myth of Zeus and Ganymede at 255c (Ganymede, "bright/cheerful counsel," comes from *ganusthai* + *mēdos*; while *mēdos* presumably is meant to be taken as "counsel," it can also refer to male genitals, and given the nature of the myth to which Socrates alludes, in conjunction with all of the sexually suggestive language of the Palinode, the reader might be expected to hear this alternate etymological root), which Socrates uses to introduce the crucial concept of return-love (*anterōs*).

divide; 266b), whom Socrates pursues (*diōkō*), “following ‘right behind (*katopisthe*) in his tracks as if he were a god” (266b). From the perspective of a reader who returns to this moment *after* considering the dialogue as a whole, a new possibility is opened up: Socrates has *genuinely* been struck by Phaedrus’s radiant *beauty* (however incipiently), and so the dissembling is *not* the final word on the matter, as Socrates himself seems to indicate by responding to Phaedrus’s accusation of making-light of the situation by raising the possibility that he is “deeply serious (*espondakenai*)” (234d).⁹⁷

4. Now, if the drama of the *Phaedrus* had *simply* incarnated the Palinode’s teachings in Socrates’s relationship with Phaedrus, we could expect Socrates to be overcome by this influx of beauty, leading toward recollective contact with the god he had formerly followed, which would result in him changing his ways so that he would try to *genuinely* serve Phaedrus rather

⁹⁷ One could take Socrates’s retort here as equally dissembling, and to do so would be natural, especially given the playful tone of the conversation and the perhaps over-discussed role of “Socratic irony” in modern Plato studies; nevertheless, I claim that the interpretation becomes *more profound* by accepting that Socrates isn’t being (wholly) ironic (or, alternatively, that Socrates’s irony is one of *deepening* the surface meaning rather than one of *dissembling* from the surface meaning), as the rest of this section will attempt to show. We’ve already discussed in prior chapters the way in which Socrates does not rescind all of the content of his anti-erotic speech; rather, he censures himself for the way in which the speech would falsify Love on account of presenting a partial truth (the truth about the false image of Love which goes by the same name) as if it were the whole truth. But what other insights might accrue for the reader on account of being presented with speeches that the text goes on to say are false (or, in other words, why did Plato include the false speeches rather than just present the Palinode, assuming it presents the truth about love)? A number of possibilities suggest themselves. First, as Griswold suggests, Socrates’s dramatic self-concealing act by which he prefaces his own false speech holds up a mirror to Phaedrus (and, by extension, to us) so that Phaedrus has an opportunity to see more clearly what exactly it is over which he’s been obsessing (*Self-Knowledge* 56; we made a similar point in Ch. 2 when we suggested that the anti-erotic speech discloses that which is implicit in Lysias’s speech). We might, then, think that Plato presents speeches the falsity of which he makes plain in order to start with where Phaedrus (and we ourselves) already are and in order to allow us a “safe” way of seeing the falsity of the opinions to which we had been inclined (safe because the arguments are not directed toward us and so the force of any existential crisis is mediated and dampened). Second, we might think, especially given Plato’s hesitance about the capacity of writing to disclose truth (as we’ll discuss in Ch. 6) that Plato thinks his insights are more easily communicated negatively than positively. Gerson’s entire “Ur-Platonism” framework (see *From Plato to Platonism*, Ch. 1) is based on the supposition that we see the contours of Plato’s worldview by tracing his negative commitments; speeches shown to be false would, if Gerson is right (as I think), give us distinct windows into the insight Plato wishes to communicate.

than butter Phaedrus up so that he could use Phaedrus as a means to his pleasure (as we discussed above with respect to using Phaedrus as a means toward Lysias’s speech). And, as we shall claim, all of this *does* eventually happen. But it happens a bit less cleanly than we might expect, *and for good reason*. In the Palinode, the divinely-mad lover’s charioteer has the allegiance of his obedient horse (“ruled by command and word alone,” 253d-e), and it is only at the end of the Palinode, when Socrates briefly discusses the “slavish economizing” that comes from “mortal moderation” bereft of divine mania (256e) that we get any inclination that the obedient horse *could* be at odds with the charioteer. Mortal moderation bereft of divine mania—that is, mortal moderation which *subordinates* reason to itself rather than being directed by an ecstatic, divinely-oriented reason (as discussed in Chapter 2)—would be the condition of a soul in which the obedient horse *disobediently* takes the hegemonic position within the soul (a possibility suggested by Socrates’s anti-erotic speech at 237e-238a). Such a soul would, for fear of lascivious desire, defend itself from being overtaken by *anything* that would threaten its autarky. And this is what we see Socrates do during his anti-erotic speech, just after he’s caught sight of Phaedrus’s radiant beauty.

5. After being roused by Phaedrus’s beauty, Socrates suddenly remembers the love poetry of “the beautiful Sappho” and “the skilled Anacreon” (235c), and he develops a “swelling in his chest” on account of having been “filled with foreign streams from somewhere [...] poured into [him], through [his] ears, as into a vessel” (235c-d). But, crucially, Socrates will deliver his anti-erotic speech with his head *covered up* (*egkalupsamenos erō*), veiling his sight and preventing Phaedrus’s radiant beauty from continuing to influence him (237a). He *prevents* (or at least *tries* to prevent) himself from being any more thoroughly infected by outside

influences.⁹⁸ He will veil himself so that he can “run through [his] speech as quickly as possible” and not become *thoroughly at a loss* (*diaporōmai*) from shame when looking toward Phaedrus (237a), for, if he looked to Phaedrus’s *beauty* while speaking *against* love, he would be in self-contradiction, leading not just to a perplexity and impasse (*aporia*), but a thorough one (*diaporia*). In other words, the only way in which Socrates can make his anti-erotic speech is by *covering himself up* so as to suppress whatever influence Love might try to exert on him through Phaedrus’s radiant beauty.⁹⁹

6. But note: Socrates has prevented himself from *seeing* (*mē blepōn*, 237a), but he can still *smell and hear*. Accordingly, the beauty of both Phaedrus and the plane-tree is temporarily inaccessible, but the chaste-tree’s “sweet perfume” is unhindered from inducing its anaphrodisiacal affect (230b), and the Cicadas continue to chirp in the trees above. Socrates here dramatically *exhibits* an overbearing mortal moderation which tries to cut itself off not just from the dangers that attend an overbearing lust for pleasure, but from *all* outside influences, but in the process, he only succeeds in cutting himself off from visual beauty, the

⁹⁸ We might consider this in light of the charioteer’s initial response to the sight of beauty, which is to violently “pull back on the reins with such violence that both horses naturally sit on their haunches” (254c). On the *perceptual* aspect of the divine invasion, see Gottfried, “Pan, the Cicadas, and Plato’s Use of Myth,” 187.

⁹⁹ McCoy has noted (in personal correspondence) another significant point in Socrates’s self-veiling: “And metaphorically, he is covering himself, insofar as his speech is not giving us the real Socrates, so in a way there Socrates is being truthful in showing that he is covered up.” It should be noted that when Socrates says that he will speak with his head covered up (*egkalupsamenos erō*), it’s not impossible that his auditor will (mis)hear that he is covering over his *erōs*, given the verbal similarity between *erō* (first person future of the semi-defective *legō*), *erō* (with first person present singular *erō*), and *erōs* (which can show up as the genitive singular *erō* and dative singular *erōi* in Homeric, a point of which we are subtly reminded when Socrates gives his etymologies of *manikē*/*mantikē* and *oionoistikē*/*oiōnistikē* at 244c, for the specific changes in the two etymologies—the *t* added to *manikē* and the lengthening of *o* to *ō* in *oionoistikē*—reflect the orthographic shift of Homeric *eros*, *erou* to Attic *erōs*, *erōtos*). Given the intentional ambiguity of the final word of Lysias’s speech (*erōta*: grammatically, second person singular imperative of *erōtaō*, to ask a question, but, given the theme, we might hear *erōs* in the accusative; cf. Scully, *Phaedrus*, 11, note 27), we might expect that Socrates will likewise play with similar linguistic ambiguities.

primary way by which Beauty *radiantly* (*lampron*, 250b) gives itself over to us (for “there is no shine in the images here on earth of justice and moderation,” 250b). He cuts off his access to visual beauty, but he does not cut off his access to the desire-suppressing odors of the willow, nor the chattering of the Cicadas, and so, consequently, he receives during his veiled declamation a *partial, inadequate* message from the divine. A genuine part taken as a part poses no problem; taking a genuine part *as if it were the whole*, on the other hand, leads to significant distortion (hence why Socrates considered himself to have sinned despite speaking truly of the dangers of *humanly*-sick love). However, as we see over the course of his anti-erotic speech, the divine refuses to be shut out. Socrates *fails* to keep himself from being influenced by divine forces, for the Nymphs continue to take hold of him ever more securely; the divine keeps breaking in, despite his attempt to block it out (see 238c-d, 241d-e). The “breaking in” of the divine will be the primary subject matter of our next chapter.¹⁰⁰

7. To say that Socrates’s anti-erotic speech is effectively the speech of the “obedient” horse when it has subordinated its master (or, alternatively put, the speech of one who is influenced by the chaste willow shrub to the *exclusion* of the erotic plane) is, to some extent, counter-intuitive (though not without precedent),¹⁰¹ for the speech is given under the specific guidance of the Muses (*ageite de, o Mousai*, 237a), and Socrates seems to be undergoing an ever

¹⁰⁰ Note that the plane-tree was also thought to be sacred to *Dionysus* (see Dorter, “Imagery and Philosophy,” 282), who is the most significant of the divinities to “break into” Socrates’s anti-erotic discourse (Dionysus’s in-breaking can be seen in the way in which Socrates’s begins to speak in dithyrambs, Dionysus’s preferred mode of poetry).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 102: “In terms of the simile that Socrates will fashion for the soul in the properly complex account that he gives of it in his mythic hymn, Lysias’ non-lover speaks with the voice of the lustful black horse [...]; *Socrates’ man adds to this drama the voice of the white horse, who seeks honour with the same unreflective determination that his black yoke-mate applies to the pursuit of pleasure, and so can do nothing but bluntly resist the other’s aims when they come into conflict with its own*; and although both characters claim to speak with the voice of reason, what we have yet to hear is reason’s true voice: that of the charioteer, who cannot achieve his own ends without learning from and harmonizing *all* voices in the soul” (emphasis added).

greater *enthusiasm* (*en + theos*, to have a god within) as the speech progresses.¹⁰² The fact that Socrates is *veiled* the whole time seems to supply some answer to these objections. Socrates has tried to cut himself off from any divine incursion into his soul, but he has also promised Phaedrus that he would deliver a speech on the same theme as Lysias had, and so, he calls upon the Muses for aid,¹⁰³ for he needs the Muses to help him deliver his “fable” (*muthos*, 237a).¹⁰⁴ But, as we just discussed, Socrates has only dulled his sight, and so he can still receive inspiration from the chirping of the Cicadas, those eternal servants of the Muses, who also test us by singing *as if Sirens* (259a). Given that the obedient horse is a lover of right opinion, and given that the poetic tradition, inspired (putatively) as it is by the Muses, forms right opinion, we might hear in Socrates’s petition a desire to conform to right opinion, which is the orienting principle of autarkical mortal moderation (see Chapter 2).

8. Ultimately, however, Socrates can’t resist the divine energies occupying the *katagōgion*, the grove where the divine is *led-down*. They break through the barrier he had erected

¹⁰² Socrates interrupts at 238c to ask whether Phaedrus also thinks he’s “caught in the grip of a divine passion (*theion pathos peponthenai*)” and then tells Phaedrus not to be astonished if he becomes “Nymph-possessed” (*numpholēptos*; 238d). When Socrates interrupts himself again to end the speech, he again refers to the danger of being possessed by the Nymphs (241e); he also refers to moving from dithyrambic to epic verse.

¹⁰³ Scully notes that this is “the *only* speech in all of Plato where a speaker calls upon the Muses” (*Phaedrus*, 15, note 39). Capra notes that “Socrates does not ask for a full revelation, but limits himself to a request for cooperation: he expects the Muses to help him along with his performance (‘with me’). Now, this is surely unparalleled in Plato, and, indeed, very rare elsewhere” (*Plato’s Four Muses*, 45). Capra also notes that Stesichorus’s *Oreisteia* began with a parallel invocation.

¹⁰⁴ One might object to translating *muthos* as “fable” here, as Scully does, on account of the fact that the Palinode is also described as *muthos* 253c and one wouldn’t want to arbitrarily change the valence of the term when it’s applied to both speeches; however, the Palinode conforms to tropes of mythical discourse insofar as it presents some drama of the gods, whereas Socrates’s anti-erotic speech has none of the standard trappings of mythical discourse. Accordingly, it seems plausible to take *muthos* as a descriptor of the anti-erotic speech to have an air of falsity, whereas *muthos* as a descriptor of the Palinode seems more fitting with the traditional sense of the term, and thus need not imply falsity. Whereas the Palinode is a tale of the lover’s journey, Socrates’s anti-erotic speech is a *tall* tale (though, again, it is not a tall tale simply because of its content, but, instead, because it’s content is delivered under the false aspect of delivering a whole account of the value of love).

to preserve himself from shame, such that he prematurely ends the speech in shame, ready to flee the scene before another divine force (his peculiar *daimonion*) prevents him from doing so until he's made reparations for his sin against Eros. Understanding Socrates's anti-erotic speech as given amidst an internal war between Socrates's mortal moderation (hypertrophic, on account of the willow's unmoderated influence) and the grove's divine energies also helps account for why the speech is ultimately *true*, yet inadequate (for it is influenced by the willow without the plane). The critique of the humanly-mad lover is never rescinded, and Socrates does not allow himself to speak positively of the non-lover. Rather, he has spoken a partial truth, as befits someone who had begun to experience the erotic madness caused by beauty but who nevertheless tried to forestall that madness by means of mortal moderation.

9. As soon as Socrates (prematurely) ends his speech and unveils himself, he becomes increasingly open to the *fullness* of divine inspiration.¹⁰⁵ Even before unveiling himself, he recognizes that something is wrong, but the anti-erotic speech is given under the false pretense that letting the divine in is the problem; rather, the problem is *not* letting the divine in *fully*, and so the moment Socrates gives up on a mortal moderation that's *not* aligned to his yearning for beauty is the moment that he makes progress.¹⁰⁶ By opening himself to the divine, Socrates is

¹⁰⁵ Capra argues that both speeches must be understood as given under inspiration, given that Socrates refers to the sources of his inspiration before the first speech, during the first speech, between the two speeches, amidst the second speech, and after the second speech (*Plato's Four Muses*, 30-34); Desjardins agrees (*Plato and the Good*, 157). My interpretation concurs, except insofar as it adds the claim that Socrates's is not *adequately* inspired in the first speech on account of his inability to access visual beauty.

¹⁰⁶ What exactly would it mean to let the divine in "fully?" A couple things should be kept in mind. Just as form is present as a whole to that which it informs, even as it is not wholly present (*totus sed non totaliter*; cf. Schindler, "Disclosing Beauty, 38"), so is the divine influence present on those are enthused (*en + theos*, to have a god within); in other words, enthusiasm does not exhaust the god who is responsible for it. Whether one fully lets the divine in (or be fully possessed) is, it seems, *prima facie* distinct from whether one has a full understanding of the divine and so it seems plausible to say that one could be fully inspired without thereby admitting that one has achieved a full comprehension of the divine by which one is inspired (for we are still subject to the limitations that attend our mortality, finitude, corporeality, and temporality). We can have an ever-deepening apprehension of what is ultimate, but we can't have a complete comprehension of what's ultimate (unless there is more to the afterlife than what

brought into a true, fully Muse-inspired madness, for he recalls the Muse-inspired words of Ibycus: “bringing harm upon the gods, I win honor among men” (242d). By recalling these words, Socrates is brought to an awareness of just what he has done (“I have realized my offense,” 242d);¹⁰⁷ in other words, Socrates has achieved the *paideia* (education, formation) that is the special province of the Muses. In the interlude between his anti-erotic speech and the Palinode, Socrates is struck by the Apollonian madness of prophecy (242c), as well as the Dionysian madness of purification (243a-b), and the three madresses together are sufficient to convince Socrates that he must learn what his mistake was and then rectify it by means of a Palinode to Eros, so that, ultimately, he might be pardoned by Eros and retain “the erotic art given me earlier” (257a). Upon doing so, Socrates is immediately confronted with two important truths, which contribute to his (re)formation: 1. Eros exists and, as something divine, can’t “be bad in any way” (242e); 2. His and Lysias’s speeches were shameless, the kind of thing one would believe only if one had been “raised among sailors and had never seen a noble form of love among the free” (243c). As a result, he will sing again, “keeping his head bare this time and not covered as before in shame” (243b). Accordingly, he will give his second

the myth portends). Nevertheless, even if the idea of one letting the divine in fully remains contentious, we can still affirm—more modestly, perhaps, but with more certainty—that one can be fully enthused in the sense that one can be convinced of the goodness and trustworthiness of the divine such that one would devote one’s entire life to it, as Socrates did, according to his testimony in the *Apology*. Socrates let the divine be *wholly directive* for him, such that it was a kind of gravitational center for his life. In this vein, Desjardins argues that the *Phaedrus* completes the project of the *Euthyphro* by finally disclosing true piety (*Plato and the Good* 149-150), a thesis with which I’m inclined to agree (though I would also say that the *Apology* more directly completes the *Euthyphro* conceptually and dramatically).

¹⁰⁷ On this, see Scully, *Phaedrus*, 22, note 58: “If we pay close attention to the verb tenses” we recognize that Socrates’s understanding of his sin has moved from an imperfective aspect (present tense) to a perfective aspect (perfect tense) upon recalling the verse; “yet another instance in the dialogue when poetry shows Socrates the way.” D. White suggests that by sinning against divine love, Socrates has sinned against the whole of the divine (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 54; cf. Desjardins, *Plato and the Good*, 157-159 for an argument that love includes the other *maniai*). See also our discussion of eschatology in Ch. 3.

speech with unhindered access to visual beauty, under the guardianship of all the local deities, as well as both the erotic plane and the chaste willow. The *daimonion* does not hinder him.¹⁰⁸

10. Now that Socrates has disarmed his hypertrophic moderating impulse so that he might receive what the divine is giving to him, Socrates has a full view of the visual beauty of the scene and of Phaedrus.¹⁰⁹ He is, as his own myth attests, transported by his vision of beauty to a memory of his prenascent journeys (for, if we can take Socrates to be speaking in his own voice despite attributing his retraction speech to Stesichorus [244a], we see that Socrates has been reminded of the god he followed [cf. “we” at 250a]).¹¹⁰ The moral and intellectual transformation that begins in the interlude between Socrates’ two speeches deepens over the course of the Palinode (it was, after all, delivered “in a measured way and with due reverence,” 265c), for he comes to some recognition of the truth about ineffable things (cf. 247c, 265b-c), and he comes to act for Phaedrus’s own sake, out of a desire to genuinely serve Phaedrus. Socrates serves Phaedrus by instructing him (cf. 278a), however poorly or well that instruction has been received and actively thought through, about the equivocality of madness, about the truth about love, about the value of his own erotic art (247a), and about the need for speech

¹⁰⁸ Pickstock notes that in unveiling himself, Socrates isn’t just furthering the drama but is also unveiling his true self, who is a true lover and a true dialectician (*After Writing* 17); cf. note 99 above.

¹⁰⁹ The Palinode takes place at noon as the sun stands still in the sky at its brightest (a fact the references to which—242a, 259a—bookend the Palinode); the stillness is an image of the eternity of that which is under discussion, and the brightness is an indication that the reality to be understood is most illuminated (and, indeed, most illuminating). For the dramatic significance of noontime in relation to Pan, see especially Gottfried, “Pan, the Cicadas, and Plato’s Use of Myth”).

¹¹⁰ The drama provides a compelling reason to think that Socrates is speaking in his own voice, even if he attributes the speech to Stesichorus, for if he weren’t speaking in his own voice, he wouldn’t be able to make amends to Love (cf. 243b). Giving the speech has (as J. L. Austin would say) a *perlocutionary* effect, regardless of whether Socrates is the originator of the speech (the perlocutionary *effect* of pledging a vow, as, for example, in marriage, is not affected in the slightest by the speaker’s authorship or non-authorship of the vow).

to be oriented toward truth (260e). Likewise, Socrates prays that Eros will redirect Phaedrus and his beloved to Love, philosophy, and wisdom-loving speeches (257b).

11. If, in Socrates's anti-erotic speech, Socrates was internally divided, now Socrates is simpler, more divine. If, in Socrates's anti-erotic speech, Socrates was *merely* doing what his beloved *wanted* (participating in a rhetorical competition), even though doing so fed into his beloved's disordered impulses, in the Palinode, Socrates is doing what his beloved *truly wants* (helping him to see, however incipiently, where his love will take him when it's rightly directed). Not only has Socrates himself been healed and transformed by love (particularly by purifying himself by means of delivering his Palinode), he has begun to lead Phaedrus to the return-love which will, if followed, heal his disordered desire. Both, then, will be able to continue to overflow to their respective beloveds, as the dialogue's end-frame suggests.

Ch. 6: Beauty and the Metaphysics of Communion

“So, wed with truth, I dwell above the Veil.”
(DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*)¹

“The important message that [the *Phaedrus*] has to teach is that the essence of the beautiful does not lie in some realm simply opposed to reality. On the contrary, we learn that however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth does not lie far off and inaccessible to us, but can be encountered in the disorder of reality, with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions. The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real.”

(Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful”)²

§1. Introduction

1. Over the course of this work, we have tried to give an interpretation of the role that soul-leading (*psuchagogia*) plays in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. We began by arguing that soul-leading is the long-sought-after unity of the dialogue (Ch. 1). In order both to substantiate this claim and to determine why the dialogue seems to be particularly interested in exploring soul-leading, we set out on an interpretation of the dialogue which continually foregrounds Plato’s frequent use of the semantic network of “leading” and “following.” By following this “leading language” as it is deployed throughout the dialogue—language which continually takes on new resonances as more terms are introduced and as terms already used are set to new purposes—we’ve developed a horizon within which we can better understand the thematic and dramatic significance of soul-leading. As we began to argue in Chs. 1 and 2, the horizon within which we are to interpret soul-leading in the *Phaedrus* is the soul’s “communion” with that which is ultimate in Plato’s universe, “really real reality” (*ousia ontōs ousa*, 247c), mythically imagined as

¹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk, Writings: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade; The Souls of Black Folk; Dusk of Dawn; Essays* (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 438.

² Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15; emphasis added. See also *Truth and Method*, 476.

a “Plain of Truth” out beyond the heavens. The soul is, as D. White puts it, “something that loves and desires communion with reality.”³

2. In this chapter, we intend to explore how reality itself invites us into communion with itself and what it looks like when we successfully accede to its invitation. Recall that we defined “communion” as a relation in which the relata 1. are genuinely together, but also 2. retain their abiding difference and mutual transcendence with respect to each other. Prior chapters gave us an outline of the goal (Ch. 2), a reason to think that the goal is, in principle, achievable for all human souls (Ch. 3), an account of how the experience of love can harmonize the soul and thus prepare it for communion (Ch. 4), and reasons to think that Plato showcases this possibility within the drama itself (Ch. 5). The preceding chapters thus focused on the human “side” of the soul’s communion with reality, whereas this chapter will focus on the reality “side.” We will try to specify the particular features of reality which make possible the soul’s communion with it. As we will see, *beauty* will play a central role in this regard, as the Gadamerian epigraph to this chapter indicates.

3. In a nutshell, we seek to show that Plato’s universe is structured in such a way that reality itself invites us into relationship with itself by “descending” to us so as to meet us where we already are, in our average everydayness, which is insufficiently attuned to the true beings, and which tends toward all sorts of “reality-resistant” vices. Reality leads us into communion with itself through a kind of “divine dance” (247a),⁴ where reality walks us through a series of “steps.” As we will see, reality can do so particularly through the activities of Beauty and how those activities effect both human souls and divine souls. Divine souls, in their perfect

³ White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 119.

⁴ For the relevance of chorale language and imagery in evaluating the *Phaedrus*, see Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art*, Ch. 6.

attunement to reality, act as reality's "co-leaders" and thus can mediate reality's leading activity for us. As we'll claim below, human beings can likewise act as "co-leaders" once they themselves have come into communion with reality. Reality, like the lover unto his beloved, descends to us and offers us the opportunity to be led-around and led back up into communion. Reality's descent is the first "movement" of the divine dance. The leading-up made possible by reality's descent, magnificently depicted in the Palinode's myth of the cosmic journey wherein the gods lead us to the Plain of Truth, is the second movement in the dance. We follow the gods to that which our desire seeks and which we must come to know in order to be adequately nourished (247d). But the second movement is not itself complete until we ourselves become like reality by descending back down to our ordinary contexts in an act of care. This descent, which is the dance's third movement, is not a falling away from the divine but instead an act of cooperative service in divine care.

4. §2 will prepare the way for our discussion of Beauty's capacity to descend to us, to lead souls back up to itself, and to lead souls back down by giving an account of the ontological features of images in the *Phaedrus*. Beauty accomplishes all that it accomplishes by descending into images. Because incarnate human souls have no direct access to the superheavenly realities in the Plain of Truth, they will not be able to commune with them without some kind of aid by which they are awakened to and elevated to those realities. Beauty, as we'll see, "bridges the gap" (§3) between the invisible and immaterial superheavenly realities and visible, material phenomena by presenting itself in and through radiant images accessible to us phenomenally. Because we only have access to the superheavenly realities indirectly through their earthly images, and because Beauty accomplishes its leading through images, we have to understand what images are and how they function in order to appreciate Beauty's role in drawing us into

communion with itself. Once this is accomplished, we can see how Beauty leads both human and divine souls both up *and* down.

5. After seeing how Beauty can accomplish this multiform leading via its images, whereby human souls are drawn into communion with it and the other superheavenly realities, we will turn to the dialogue's discussion of writing (§4). A significant part of our argument over the course of this work is that the "ascent" to reality is not, in fact, completed when one comes to recognize and gaze upon the true beings; rather, the ascent is only completed in a corresponding "descent," wherein we actively take on a role, as our own work, in contributing to the providential care that structures the world. We have not fully communed with reality *until* we have allowed that communion to shape our lives so that we live in conformity with reality's norms. We will focus on writing as a place wherein we can see how human beings can "cooperatively descend" with Beauty. We will focus on writing, rather than language generally, since writing, as presented in the *Phaedrus*, seems to be the least reality-directed mode of language use (as we discussed in Ch. 2, §4.2), and so if writing can be a place wherein we contribute to reality's self-manifestation, then the same could be said, *a fortiori*, of language generally. Beautiful language (cooperatively) makes "visible" the invisible forms; it is the radiance of the forms as it has been appropriated and "co-expressed" through history. Naturally, this final section will serve as a comment on Plato's craft of writing as a whole, and so it is a fitting place to end.

§2. Ontology of the Image

§2.1. General Features of Images

1. In order to follow this line of thought through, we must first make some general observations about the ontology of the image in the *Phaedrus*, since images are the places where

we initially encounter the true beings and the places from which we are led up by and to the true beings.⁵ While Plato does occasionally have his characters draw linguistic distinctions between different kinds or functions of images in other dialogues, there is no overt linguistic distinction drawn in the *Phaedrus* between different kinds of images.⁶ Indeed, Socrates seems to avoid doing so here. We find uses of *eikōn* (image, likeness; related to *eikō* and *eoika*, to seem, to be like, as well as to *eikos*, that which is likely or probable), *eidōlon* (image, likeness, phantom; related to *eidos*, form), and *homoioīma* (likeness, resemblance, image; from *homos*, alike, common, joint) at a number of key junctures in the *Phaedrus*. In the rich passage which follows Socrates's introduction of love as the fourth kind of divine madness, Socrates seems to use *eikōn*, *eidōlon*, and *homoioīma* interchangeably:

Whenever [souls] behold (*idōsin*) a likeness (*homoioīma*) of the things there [out beyond the heavens], they are thoroughly startled (*ekplēttontai*) and they are no longer in themselves (*ouket' en hautōn*) and they do not recognize the experience (*pathos*) that they are having on account of not perceiving sufficiently (*bikanōs diaisthanesthai*). There is no shine (*phēggos*) in the likenesses here on earth (*en tois teide homoioīmasin*) of justice and moderation and the other things dear to souls, but through the dim organs of the senses a few people, with difficulty (*mois*), approaching these images (*epi tas eikonas iontes*), behold the original of the thing imaged (*theontai to tou eikasthentos genos*). [...] But now, as we were saying, beauty shone brightly (*elampen*) in the midst of those visions. And when we came here, we grasped it shining most clearly (*stilbon enargestata*) through the clearest (*enargestatēs*) of our senses, because sight (*opsis*) is the sharpest (*oxustatē*) of our bodily senses. But by it thought (*phronēsis*) is not seen (*horatai*)— for such a thing would provide formidable loves, if, moving into sight, it could provide a clear image (*enarges eidōlon*)

⁵ On this point, see Gonzalez, “The Power and Ambivalence of a Beautiful Image in Plato and the Poets,” *Plato and the Power of Images*, eds. Radcliffe Edmonds and Pierre Destrée (Boston: Brill, 2017), 47: “[The *Phaedrus*] shows how the attraction to beautiful images, far from being a mere hindrance to philosophy, as a hasty reading of the *Republic* might suggest, can provide its indispensable impetus. Even if part of us is satisfied with a beautiful image and seeks its mere possession, another part of us can be attracted to it in such a way as to be led beyond it to the original of which it is an image. The image is here transformed from a barrier between the sensible and the intelligible into a bridge.” See also more generally Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, ch. 6 (we’ll cite particular aspects in passing below). As McCoy argues at length, images are *integral* to philosophical argument; Plato’s use of images are never simply rhetorical, pedagogical, or ironical, but instead are part and parcel of the philosophical search for truth in the human condition. See *Image and Argument*, Introduction, *passim*, and especially 182-183.

⁶ In the *Sophist*, for example, we see the Eleatic Stranger distinguish between two forms of image-making (*eidōlōpoiikē*; see 236a-c, 264c-d): likeness-making (*eikastikē*) crafts a beautiful likeness (*eikōn*) of an original by truly imitating the original, as when a sculptor sculpts a statue that conforms to the original’s proportions, whereas apparition-making (*phantastikē*), by contrast, crafts an apparition (*phantasma*) that is untrue to its model; the apparition appears “like the beautiful only because it’s seen from an unbeautiful point of view” (236b), as when an one crafts an enormous statue disproportionately so that it appears beautiful from the perspective of one who is appreciating it from below.

of itself—nor are other such lovely things. But, as it is, beauty alone has this distinction to be naturally the most clearly visible (*ekphanestaton*) and the most lovely. (250a-e; translation modified)⁷

In this passage, *eikōn*, *eidōlon*, and *homoioōma* jointly refer to earthly images of the love-inspiring superheavenly realities, graspable (albeit, with difficulty) by incarnate souls through bodily perception (especially sight). While *eikōn* and *eidōlon* are also used in other contexts, those other uses, like the ones seen in the passage quoted above, refer to something which resembles an original without being identical to the original (as a statue resembles the sculptor's subject without sharing the subject's capacities).⁸ Because the image resembles its original, images can, in each case, disclose something of the original and thus have the potential to lead the soul from the image present here and now to the original, which may be currently absent (as in the case of the subject of a sculpture) or which may be the kind of thing not graspable, strictly speaking, by perception at all (as in the case of the forms). Though images do have the potential to lead the soul, their efficacy, like that of any soul-leader, is conditioned, in part, by the follower's willingness and ability to follow (see, e.g., 247a).

⁷ On *mogis* (with difficulty, toilsomely; hence also "scarcely"), used here and at 248a, see Ch. 3, note 91.

⁸ *Eikōn* is used at 235d (Phaedrus promises to set up statue-images of himself and Socrates if Socrates can outcompete Lysias in speech-craft) and 250b (in reference to earthly images of the superheavenly realities). The closely related verb form, *eikazō*, to represent in an image, is used at 248a (to speak of souls which follow after and make themselves images of gods) and 250b (in reference to earthly images of the superheavenly realities); *apeikazō* is used at 265b (of the Palinode itself as a mythic image of erotic experience). *Eidōlon* is used at 250d (in reference to earthly images of the superheavenly realities), 255d (where Socrates describes the divinely-mad beloved's "return-love" as an image of love), and 276a (where Phaedrus suggests that writing, in the sense of inscribing something on corporeal objects, is an image of what Socrates calls writing in the soul, as we'll discuss in §4). *Homoioōma* is used at 250a and 250b (in reference to earthly images of the superheavenly realities). *Homoiotēs*, which is closely related to *homoioōma*, is used at 240c (in reference to the traditional notion that like things attract each other; the negation, *anhomoiotēs* is used here as well in the same context), 253b (where Socrates suggests that divinely mad lovers try to make their beloveds like unto the god whom they follow; cf. also *homoioōtaton* at 253b), and twice at 262a, twice at 262b, and twice at 273d (to clarify the way in which someone who knows the truth can abuse similarities to lead an auditor from truth to falsity; the negative is used here in the same context). *Mimeōmai* (to imitate) is used at 251a in the sense of being an image (a godlike face that imitates beauty), but elsewhere it refers more actively to imitating and making oneself an image of something (252d, 253b, and the warning at 264e). However, the sole use of *mimēsis* (imitation; 248e) occurs more negatively in Socrates's ranking of the poets and imitators in the sixth position in his discourse on the "Inescapable Law."

2. We can draw out some common features of the Platonic understanding of images, as present in the *Phaedrus*, from the uses for the dialogue's three words for images (*eikōn*, *eidōlon*, *homoioōma*) and etymologically related terms. In each case the image is characterized by a diminishment in features or capacities compared to the original: an ensouled living thing, compared to a bronze image thereof, has vital activities and passions (cf. 245c) that soulless matter cannot have; living *logos*, unlike its written image, can defend itself and adjust its message for the auditor (cf. 275d-e, to be discussed in greater depth in §4 below); the beloved,⁹ in her nascent return-love, only dimly recognizes Beauty (in a reflection) and the god whom she followed, whereas the lover, in her thoroughly ecstatic love, is struck by and transported to Beauty and makes memorial contact with the god whom she followed.¹⁰ Likewise, in each case, there is a sense in which the image is ontologically dependent on the original: while a statue can and will exist long after its subject dies, the statue, insofar as it is specifically an image of *this* subject, couldn't exist as such without its subject's prior existence; likewise, while a piece of writing can exist long after its author dies, it can't exist except insofar as the author's living thought is inscribed upon a corporeal medium; the beloved's return-love is said to come out of an "overflow" of the lover's love (255c). By being ontologically dependent on its original, every image has a referential relationship to its original (though this referentiality can be

⁹ Notably, Socrates twice refers to the beloved as a statue (*agalma*, 251a, 252d), further drawing the reader to see a parallelism between the beloved/statue/image and lover/subject/original.

¹⁰ There is, to some extent, a disanalogy when comparing the relationship between the lover's love and the beloved's nascent return-love (said to be an image of love) to the relationships between superheavenly form and earthly image, subject and statue, and soul-writing and corporeal writing. While the latter three image/original relationships all indicate a clear diminishment of reality (i.e., the image is ontologically "lower" than the original in the hierarchical ordering of reality), signaled by a diminishment of unity, vitality, capacities, etc., the beloved's situation with respect to the lover seems to be one of degree rather than kind, since today's beloved can, as we noted in Ch. 4, become tomorrow's lover. However, as we discussed in Ch. 4, the hierarchical relationship between the lover and the beloved is not equalized without a lengthy time period of living together in a mutual pursuit of wisdom, and the beloved is still dependent on the lover for guidance. A similar point holds for the use of *eikazō* at 248a, where Socrates speaks of souls being images of the gods whom they follow.

obscured or forgotten); when images are encountered *as* images, their reference back to their originals can be observed (however clearly or poorly) and followed. Accordingly, it would seem that what it is to *be* an image, in the *Phaedrus*, is to be something which is related to an original, both ontologically and referentially, without being that original, since the image suffers a diminishment of capacities in relation to its original. This characterization of the relationship between image and original is consistent with the characterization we see in Plato between form and instance, highlighted in the passage quoted above. The superheavenly forms are ontologically distinct from and independent of their earthly images, but the earthly images are ontologically dependent on and refer to the superheavenly forms.

3. Images, as we said, are ontologically dependent on their originals, whereas originals are not ontologically dependent on their images, and thus we can say that there is a “vertical” distinction (or a distinction in kind) between image and original. Images exist always on a “lower” plane than their originals (either totally, as in the relationship between instances of forms and the forms themselves, or in some respect, as in the relationship between statues and their subjects). In this way, we can distinguish what it is to be an image from other referential relationships which may at first look similar, such as being a copy.¹¹ While images, copies, and symbols all have a referential relationship to some “original,” they refer to those originals in disparate ways. Images refer to their originals by being “like” them without being identical to them; images present the content of an original in a new, “lower” mode, and in

¹¹ Socrates makes this point more directly in the *Cratylus*: “[...] if something is going to be an image (*eikōn*), it’s necessary that it not at all render everything such as it is in that of which it’s an image (*hōi eikazei*). [...] Would there be two things of a kind, such as Cratylus and an image of Cratylus, if one of the gods not only made a likeness of your color and shape the way painters do, but also [...] in a word, established another of the same sort as everything that you have right next to you? Would there then be Cratylus and an image of Cratylus, or two Cratyluses?” (432b-c; see also d and *Sophist* 240a-b). Socrates here distinguishes an *image* of Cratylus, which does not share all of Cratylus’s features, from a *copy* of Cratylus, which is identical in every way except numerically.

the process, they both lose something of the original and add something to the original (a point to which we'll return below). Images, as we said, entail a "vertical" distinction between two different orders of existence, where the image is non-reciprocally dependent upon the original. A copy, on the other hand, has no essential "vertical" dimension, but is instead analyzable on the "horizontal" dimension alone.¹² The thing copied presupposes only *temporal* priority, not *ontological* priority. Hence there is only numerical distinction between the thing copied and the copy, whereas there is a distinction in the order of being between the image and the thing imaged (irreducible to numerical distinction). While a statue can only be of *this* subject if it is an image thereof, another artisan could reproduce the first statue without reference to the original subject. The new statue is a copy with respect to the original statue and an image with respect to the subject, so long as it retains the original subject's likeness. Likewise, as we'll discuss further below (§4), a piece of writing can be an image (*eidolon*, 276a) of living discourse insofar as it inscribes living thought on a material medium, but a piece of writing can also be a copy insofar as one reproduces another piece of writing. In both cases, there can be more and less faithful images and copies, but what it is to *be* an image or a copy is distinct from any question about faithfulness.¹³ Notably, one can copy an image over and over again without having seen the original via the image, but one could not craft an image without having some insight into the original. As we'll see below, one way of understanding Socrates's criticisms of writing is just this: writing can be copied without being recognized *as* an image, and so one can be fooled into thinking that having a written image of wisdom is

¹² On this, see especially Perl, "The Presence of the Paradigm." Cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 293. Cf. also Plotinus, *Enneads* I.2.2 and I.4.3. Gadamer articulates a similar distinction between the image [Bild] and the copy; see *Truth and Method*, 133-134.

¹³ The dialogue offers an interesting example in its two different versions of the myth of Boreas (whether Boreas abducts Oreithuia from along the Ilissos, as per 229c, or from the Areopagus, as per 229d). The two versions provide two different images of the same content and thus are not copies of each other.

sufficient for having wisdom, when writing can, in fact, only serve as a reminder for someone who already has insight (275a-d).¹⁴

4. Though Socrates does not here make terminological distinctions between different kinds of image, he does make distinctions between, on the one hand, different ways in which the originals present themselves through images, and, on the other hand, different ways in which we approach the images given to us in our experience. In the passage discussed above, we see that images of Beauty are distinguished from images of all the other “lovely forms” on account of beauty’s “radiance.” Beauty, Socrates says, “shone brightly” (250c-d) and, in doing so, makes itself visible to our perception, whereas there is “no shine in the images here on earth of justice and moderation and the other things honorable for souls” (250b). Images of Beauty *present* their content more vividly than do images of other forms; they are “clearest,” most brilliant, and most palpable (*enargestata*). While a viewer of the other forms can still, “with difficulty, approach these images and behold the original of the thing imaged” (250b), the referential aspect of these images is less pronounced and harder to discern because the originals present themselves less palpably. Beauty, by contrast, seems to assault our senses in its images (cf. 230b-c, 254b) and thereby is able to “break through” our ordinary compartments (as we’ll discuss in §3.1).

5. But, as we just noted, the differences between how we appreciate images is related not just to differences among the ways in which originals present themselves but also to differences among the ways in which we approach images, and so we must also pay attention to different possible compartments we can have. Immediately following the passage discussed

¹⁴ There are other referential relationships distinct from images and copies, which likewise can serve to remind someone of that which they reference. See, e.g., Radcliffe Edmonds, “Putting Him on a Pedestal: (Re)collection and the Use of Images in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Plato and the Power of Images*, 68-73.

above, Socrates distinguishes between the “corrupted” person and the “recent initiate” in terms of how quickly they can be conveyed from earthly images of beauty to Beauty itself. The corrupted person “is not conveyed quickly” and “fails to experience true reverence as he gazes but yields to pleasure” (250e), whereas the recent initiate is overcome by the presence of Beauty in its image, such that she feels “reverence” (251a, 254b); the experience both nourishes her (see 252b) and prompts in her a new moral restraint (see 254b-c). While Beauty *can* break through even the corrupted person’s misorientation toward the things of her experience, its work on such a soul seems to occur more slowly in proportion to the viciousness (or, more neutrally, to the lack of attunement) of that soul. Given that the other forms can only be apprehended in their earthly images with difficulty, it would seem that a vicious soul is quite unlikely to successfully recognize the image-character of such images and thus unlikely to be led beyond them to their originals without a significant shift in her way of life. As we’ve argued (Ch. 4), the experience of love can accomplish this reorientation (or “leading-around”), but not without the newly-turned soul’s active cooperation; the same will hold, as we’ll soon discuss, for Beauty’s capacity to reorient us.

6. Despite the fact that images are constituted by an ontological dependence upon and reference to their originals, they are generally experienced as loci of ambiguity. Images require interpretation in order to be appreciated as images, and our capacity to interpret them well is conditioned by our background experiences, worldview, and comportment. If, for example, we have a deficient understanding of that which the image images, as in the case of the soul who, “harassed by the horses,” only sees some of the superheavenly realities in its most recent journey before returning to earth (248a), then we are liable to misinterpret the image, thereby

failing to see the original in and through it.¹⁵ When we turn to an image—especially one of the images which has “no shine”—without a suitable attunement whereby we can recognize the image *as* an image (i.e., as referential and dependent), as when we are corrupt, inattentive, or ignorant, we fail to appreciate the imagistic character of the image and thus fail to behold in it the original which it images. Our capacity to see images as images is dependent on antecedent knowledge of that which is imaged (having seen the forms while discarnate), and that knowledge can be forgotten, especially if we saw the forms “briefly or had bad luck when falling here” or were “turned toward injustice” by our friends and milieu (250a). While some images are able to powerfully evoke in us a memory of their originals, others are less able to do so, and when we come across such “dim” images, we are likely to comport ourselves toward them as if they were not, in fact, images, and thus misunderstand them in the process. But even the bright images can pose problems for us to the extent that they evoke something strongly in us that we don’t recognize (250a), opening for us the possibility that we’ll misinterpret the experience and act accordingly (as when the corrupt are led by images of beauty into “unnatural pleasure” (251a).

7. For a person in her average everydayness, images can indeed lead (they are, we might say, soul-leaders *par excellence*, insofar as they can communicate the content of their originals to a recipient in a mode that is suitable for the recipient, even as they draw the recipient beyond

¹⁵ As an example, recall our discussion of the Boreas myth in Ch. 5. The reader is primed initially to interpret the Boreas myth as a depiction of violent rape, and this interpretation suits the conception of love presupposed by the anti-erotic speeches, a conception Phaedrus himself seems to share at first, given the frequency of his appeals to force (e.g., 236d). But after Socrates recognizes his blasphemy against Love (242b-d), he provides a key for reinterpretation: if some putatively divine being is indeed divine, it can’t be bad in any way (242e). After seeing how Socrates reinterprets Love as the giver of the greatest of gifts, the reader, newly oriented to new ways of understanding the phenomenon of love, is able to reinterpret the Boreas myth as an image of divine rapture.

that mode of reception to the original itself), but they can also *mislead*.¹⁶ Our capacity to be misled by images increases in accordance with our corruption (or inattentiveness or ignorance), with their phenomenal brilliance, and with the degree to which sensuous images fall short of their originals. It would seem, then, that the ambiguity of the image reflects the basic ambiguity of soul-leading we've discussed before (Ch. 4).¹⁷ And because images *necessarily* fall short of their original (this is part of what it is to be an image), there is a gap between image and original that a wily rhetorician can exploit. If one can “discern accurately the similarities (*homoiotēta*) and dissimilarities (*anomoiotēta*) of things” (262a), one can utilize the gaps between images and originals to *mislead* one's auditors from truth to falsehood (see 262a-d). A wily rhetorician can also utilize the powerful affective responses evoked in us via bright images in order to direct us toward the course of action she desires.¹⁸ Images, then, can mislead the poorly-attuned, and the unscrupulous but wily can exploit the power of images to mislead.

§2.2. The Palinode as an Image

8. The ontological characteristics of images just outlined show up especially prominently in Socrates's sole use of *apeikazō* (to make an image or likeness of, to represent, to compare) to characterize the Palinode. We'll briefly discuss how they do so in order to exemplify what we've just noted. As Socrates introduces collection and division in the later discussion of artful speaking and writing, he explains:

In some way, though I can't say exactly how, we offered an image (*apeikazontes*) of erotic experience and perhaps touched upon a truth in some instances and in others were wide of the mark, blending together

¹⁶ See Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 16, 148: “Images are the appropriate medium for an embodied soul to have philosophical insight. [...] For human beings, learning just is looking to images.”

¹⁷ Plato even draws a connection between the two issues in the *Timaeus* when Timaeus refers to the soul's lowest part being the kind of thing that “would, at night and by day, fall readily under the spell (*psuchagōgēsoito*) of images and phantasms (*eidōlōn kai phantasmātōn*)” (71a).

¹⁸ Socrates says of Thrasymachus that he “excelled in the art of drawing out the pitiful wailings over old age and poverty. He was also a clever fellow at infuriating a crowd and then with his bewitching incantations soothing the angry mob, as he put it” (267c-d).

a not totally unpersuasive account in a playful way (*prosepaíamen*)—but also in a measured way with due reverence—in a mythic hymn to your master and mine, Phaedrus, to Eros, the guardian of beautiful boys. (265b-c)¹⁹

We should recall that Socrates introduces his discussion of the nature of the soul by saying that he will *liken* it (*eoiketō*) to “the innate power of a winged team of horses and a charioteer” (246a; recall that *eoika* is etymologically related to *eikōn*, image) on account of the fact that the “leading-through” (*diēgēseōs*; colloquially: narrative) of the account of the soul’s nature (*idea*) would have to be lengthy and divine (*theias*; 246a). It is sensible that Socrates should characterize the mythic hymn in both of these remarks as a kind of image-making activity, for the Palinode itself presents the nature of the soul, the nature of erotic experience, and the character of our journey into communion with reality in an accessible way for an incarnate soul who has no direct access to a non-imagistic vision of the realities under discussion.

9. While it is clear that the complexity of the chariot image conveys something of the complexity of our own souls and of the experience we have of being internally divided, as if there were actually a struggle between different agents for control over the direction of the whole soul’s activity, it is also clear that the myth isn’t giving a literal description of our soul’s constituency. In this way, the myth presents an original reality (the experience of internal division and of the soul’s struggle to come to internal harmony as it struggles to direct itself toward the right ends) in a new mode, communicating something invisible and immaterial as if it were visible and material. Because that which is imaged is presented in a “lower” mode, it is made accessible to human beings who are more apt to understand visible, material realities even as the image communicates something that is irreducible to such realities (for, minimally, the image presents the charioteer’s knowledge of the superheavenly things via the relationship

¹⁹ As Scully notes ad loc., *prospaizō*, to play, also bears the sense of singing praise (cf. LSJ s.v. A.II, citing *Phaedrus* 265c) when used in reference to the gods and does so having “nothing to do with irony.” This is relevant to any evaluation of the “seriousness” of the Palinode.

of sight, which presupposes a distance and a difference between subject and object, as opposed to the relationship of knowledge, wherein that distance is collapsed and wherein subject and object become, in a certain sense, identical).²⁰ And because the image can present something intelligible but non-sensible *as if* it were sensible, it is able to function as a soul-leader which can draw the auditor from her own everyday sense-experience up to a “vision” of the reality of the soul itself.

10. In addition to the feature of images just discussed—presenting intelligible content in a more limited, sensible mode—the Palinode’s myth also is ontologically dependent upon and refers to that of which it is an image (our erotic experience and the realities disclosed thereby). As the myth indicates, having seen the superheavenly realities is a condition of being human (249b). Human beings must be able to understand some intelligible reality, or “form,” present in but irreducible to some “plurality of perceptions” through an act of reasoning (249b-c). We do so by “recollecting” the things previously seen, looking away in thought from earthly images to the intelligible realities of which they are images (249c), as when we are “reminded of the true beauty” while looking upon “earthly beauty” (249d). But just as a statue couldn’t be sculpted specifically to be an image of *this* subject without some awareness of *this* subject, so the myth couldn’t be given *as* an image of erotic experience, and of that which erotic experience discloses (reality), without the myth-maker having some recognition of erotic experience and what erotic experience discloses. If our argument in Ch. 5 holds—namely, that Socrates himself experiences the erotic experience of the Palinode’s mythic lover within the drama of the dialogue—then we have some warrant for thinking that Socrates is, in fact, in a position to make a true image of such experience. In other words, the myth can give an image

²⁰ See Perl, *Thinking Being*, 46-54.

of recollection occasioned by erotic experience precisely because the myth-maker has had an experience of recollection occasioned by erotic experience, and the myth wouldn't be able to *be* an image thereof without that experience.²¹

11. Socrates says that philosophers are those whose thought becomes winged by being near to the superheavenly realities in memory, and that being near in memory requires “correctly handling such reminders (*hupomnēmasin*)” (249c). Contextually, “correctly handling reminders” seems to indicate being able to view an earthly image *as* an image of a superheavenly reality, whereby the image is seen as a reminder of that which the soul remembers from its experiences prior to being joined with a body. But when this remark is considered in light of the whole dialogue—particularly in light of the dialogue’s only other use of the word “reminder” (*hupomnēma*; 276d), within the later “critique of writing”—another possibility emerges.²² To be able to correctly handle reminders is not only to be able to recognize that an earthly image points beyond itself to a superheavenly reality, but also to be able to “build up a treasure trove of reminders (*hupomnēmata*) both for [oneself ...] *and for all who walk down the same path*” (276d; emphasis added). One who is near to the superheavenly realities in memory and who can correctly handle reminders will also be able, in principle, to present others with reminders that could spark a recollection of the realities they too had seen before they came into their bodily forms.²³ This is, I take it, exactly what the Palinode is

²¹ If, as Socrates says, the myth is not his own but instead comes from Stesichorus (244a), the same point would hold, except that Socrates’s role would be restricted to mediating Stesichorus’s own image-making activity, based on his own experience of *erōs*.

²² The suggestion that we should interpret the two uses of *hupomnēma* in the *Phaedrus* in light of each other is strengthened by the fact that the word is rather rare in Plato (the only other uses are at *Theaetetus* 143a and *Statesman* 295c; the use in the *Statesman* is a particularly germane parallel to Socrates’s use in the *Phaedrus*’s critique of writing, though there is no space to explore the parallel here).

²³ We will consider this point more directly in §4. See also Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 152.

supposed to accomplish in context. It is a beautiful reminder of Beauty, tailored especially for a soul who is already attuned to the beauty to be found in words.

12. Finally, Socrates's categorization of the Palinode's myth as an image is particularly apt on account of its ambiguity, for it is unclear to what extent the reader is supposed to take the myth as truth-disclosive. As Socrates himself admits, the myth has an ambiguous claim to truth: perhaps, he says, we "touched upon a truth in some instances and in others were wide of the mark" (265b). Insofar as the myth is specifically identified as an image (*apeikazontes*; 265b), we should expect, given the prior remarks, that it must simultaneously present intelligible truth in a new mode even as it fails to do so exhaustively, for, by presenting that truth in a "lower" mode, features present in the original are lost. Because the myth is an image, it must inevitably *fail* to give an exhaustive account of the truth it tries to present, and since the myth communicates an intellectual content in an alien mode, it must inevitably add in foreign aspects to that which it communicates. Hence, it is sensible that the myth should be "wide of the mark" at times just insofar as it is an image.²⁴

13. But because only one who already had clear access to the thing imaged could aptly judge the merits of the mythical image's presentation of intelligible content, it will inevitably be difficult for anyone who lacks such clear access to determine in what ways the mythical image is accurate and in which ways it is "wide of the mark." Given that Socrates is trying to communicate something ineffable (247c), it's safe to assume that none but the wise (if such wisdom is even a possibility for us in our finitude) would already have the clear access needed to discern thoroughly the myth's truthfulness. Lacking clear access, we instead need to be led

²⁴ Cf. Latona, "This Tale is Not My Own," 192. See also Gurtler, "The Distorted City in the Republic," *Literary, Philosophical, and Religious Studies in the Platonic Tradition: Papers from the 7th Annual Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2013), 126: "Words as images are in a sense always false; the word is not the thing it signifies." See also 132-134.

back and up (*anagein anō*) to the superheavenly place (272d) in order to remember that which is imaged, which is what the image attempts to accomplish, if indeed it is a true image of something true. The significant scholarly disagreement about how to assess the “truth-value” of the myth, however, is a further indication of the ambiguity that the mythic image presents, for there are multiple ways to construe where the myth touches upon truth and where it misses the mark. If, as some argue, the Palinode not only can’t be taken straightforwardly as Platonic doctrine but, worse yet, is vitiated by some fundamental falsity, then the mythic image is just as liable to *mislead* as it is to lead. Indeed, the myth might be *meant* to mislead.²⁵ As Socrates later says, “both the speeches were models of sorts, revealing how someone who knows the truth could play around (*prospaiζōn*) with words and lead his audience on (*paragōi*)” (262d; cf. 262b). Perhaps the most common reading of this remark is that which takes Socrates to be admitting that he was misleading Phaedrus in his first speech but later on telling the truth in his second speech, but Socrates nowhere explicitly denies the possibility that he’s misleading Phaedrus in the Palinode. We are left, then, with Phaedrus’s earlier question: “But tell me, Socrates, in the name of Zeus, do you really think (*peithēi*) that this mythical story (*muthologēma*) is true?” (229c). What we need is a way to assess the truth-value of images so that we can determine when and whether they are leading us toward truth or misleading us. The possibility that the Palinode itself is a misleading image makes this task all the more urgent.

§2.3. Resolving Ambiguity: Different Modes of Seeing Images

²⁵ See, e.g., Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 151-156; Altman, *The Guardians in Action*, 146-147; Werner, “Problem of Unity,” 121-122 and Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*, 56 *et passim*. By contrast, others have argued that Plato’s myths are not only true but indeed traditional truth not created by anyone but only mediated by Plato’s poesy; see especially Latona, “This Tale is Not My Own,” 183-184, 203-204, 207-208 and, in a similar vein, Pieper, *The Platonic Myths*, trans. Dan Farrelly (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press 2011), 11-15, 29, 41, 48.

14. Our capacity to engage fruitfully with images depends, it seems, on the mode of sight by which we apprehend them. The Palinode shows us a number of possible ways of “seeing” what’s before us. Most frequently, we have a simple sight of the object of vision, which apprehends that object and terminates in that object. Given the content of the Palinode, it is unsurprising that the majority of Socrates’s uses of verbs for seeing (*idein*, *theaomai*, *theōrein*, etc.) characterize the soul’s discarnate apprehension of the superheavenly realities, where the soul’s seeing simply terminates in the thing seen, since the forms are not themselves images but realities. When souls get a thorough look (e.g., *kathorai*, 247d) and contemplate (*theōrousa*, 247d) the forms, they are nourished and become joyous. The forms, however, are not accessible by direct sight while incarnate, with the exception of Beauty. While incarnate, we can only “see” the forms indirectly by means of a sight of their earthly images. But, notably, there are different modes of seeing the earthly images themselves. Some souls, for example, see the images and nothing more: “When looking (*theōmenos*) at beauty’s namesake (*epōnumian*) here, [the person who has been corrupted or who hasn’t been recently initiated] fails to experience true reverence as he gazes (*prosorōn*) but yields to pleasure” (250e). By contrast, other souls who have “amply observed (*polutheamōn*) things from the past realm” are struck by terrors and feel reverence when they see (*idēi*) any body that “is a good imitation (*memimēmenon*) of beauty” (251a). Whereas the former souls are characterized as failing to recognize a fundamental feature of the image at hand in their blinkered vision, the latter souls experience the image not simply as some object present at hand, at most a source of pleasure but nothing more, but instead as somehow indicative of something momentous, worthy of reverence, standing beyond the image, even though even the recently initiated soul who had seen much is initially unsure as to what this image portends. The former souls see and then seek to devour, whereas the latter souls see and then seek to continue seeing. In doing so, the latter souls are

changed as they look (251b), for they receive “the in-flowing beauty through the eyes” which “waters” the “natural power of the wing” (251b), healing and nourishing the soul. This nourishment is not only a source of pleasure (251d, 252a) and not only a spur to continue seeing (251e), but also a preparation for the soul to be able to engage in a “higher” mode of seeing while here on earth.

15. The recently initiated see and experience terror, reverence, healing, nourishment, pleasure, and desire, and once such a person has been invaded by beauty through the eyes, she begins to look not just *at* the image, but *beyond* the image. Lovers are “fiercely driven to gaze (*blepein*) upon the god” whom they followed (253a), and when they begin to pick up the god’s “habits and practices” (253a), the sight (*opsisin*) of beauty now can carry the lover’s memory back to Beauty itself, such that she sees (*eiden*) Beauty itself once more (254b). This capacity to not only see an image but also to see *through* an image to that of which it is an image is, it would seem, both a distinctly human mode of seeing and the way we *ought* to engage with images. Socrates distinguishes properly human souls from properly animal souls (see 249b) by the human soul’s capacity to “understand what is said in reference to form” by “going from a plurality of perceptions (*ek pollōn ion aisthēseōn*)” and drawing together what is common in this plurality “by reasoning into a single essence” (249b-c). Human souls can “recollect (*anamnēsis*)” that which they had previously “seen (*eiden*)” while discarnate during their incarnate lives when they learn to “overlook (*hyperidoussa*) those things which we now say exist and lift up their heads into the really real (*anakupsasa eis to on ontōs*)” (249c; translation modified).²⁶ Seeing through the

²⁶ Scully translates *hyperidein* with its colloquial sense “look with contempt.” I give a calque in my modification instead for two reasons. First, the more literal sense provides a nice image for how the soul could “collect” the disparate perceptions into a common *logos* since it is able to see them all at once (and, it seems, there is a non-discursive or intuitive moment in every act of collection and recollection, even if the non-discursive moment is not the entirety of any act of collection or recollection; cf. Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 55-56, 87-88). Second, the interpretation of Plato’s attitude toward images I seek to give here is one which stresses the positive role that images play in our lives and which sees the dangerous aspects

image to what is imaged allows the soul to recognize the non-finality of the image and thus no longer be held captive by it.

16. But do we really need to cultivate this capacity to “see through” images to that which they image? Socrates gives two kinds of response to this question. The first, eudaimonistic response is that we need to cultivate this capacity to “see through” images because by doing so we can reacquire our lost “wingedness” (see 249d) whereby we are able to return back to the superheavenly place. If we cannot return to the superheavenly place, we are cut off from the only adequate “food” for the governing part of our souls, and so we must inevitably remain spiritually “malnourished” insofar as we do not cultivate this capacity. In other words, learning to “see through” images to their originals is a fundamental condition of our happiness, for we cannot be happy unless we satisfy, in a genuine way, all of the primary modes of desiring within us, especially intellectual desire for truth, which is most governing in us and which requires seeing through images to the truths they portend. Further, as we argued in Ch. 4, the process of coming to recognize Beauty via beautiful images is necessary for rightly directed *erōs* and the interpersonal relationships which can blossom when both parties have rightly directed *erōs*.

17. The second response that Socrates gives is that seeing-through images to that which they image is a necessary condition for beautiful, artful speech, whether ordered to persuasion of another (260e, in response to 260a) or, more properly, toward gratification of the gods (273e). Socrates argues for this latter conclusion in response to Phaedrus’s citation of the rhetorical commonplace “that a student studying to become an orator need not learn

of images, which Plato elsewhere roundly condemns, as emerging from failures to apprehend what images actually *are*. “Look with contempt” evacuates *hyperidein* of its ambiguity, forcing the reader to see a confirmation of the common story about Plato’s “miseikonia” (hatred of images), whereas “overlook” preserves the ambiguity.

what justice really is, but merely what it seems to be to the masses [...]; persuading comes from this, not from the truth” (260a). This rhetorical commonplace is a direct rejection of the need to be able to see through images; rather, rhetorical power, so the rhetoricians claim, comes from one’s capacity to *manipulate* images and appearances according to one’s own goals, irrespective of any recognition of truth. While being able to present well-crafted images and thereby direct an audience’s soul is a prerequisite for the rhetorical art (see 267c), this skill is not yet sufficient for artful persuasion, for the image-turner won’t be able to select the right image for the job if she is ignorant both of the nature of the audience’s soul and the nature of the matter under discussion (273d-e, 247b-c). Accordingly, even if one has the mistaken view that her happiness is to be achieved by manipulating people and events so as to bring about what she happens to think is favorable for herself, she will be unable to do so artfully (i.e., by skill rather than luck) without learning to see through images to the realities they image (though it would seem that if a rhetorician learned to do so, she would no longer think of happiness in such terms, but would instead join in Socrates’s concluding prayer to “consider the wise man rich” and “have only as much gold as a moderate man can carry and use;” 279b-c). Learning to see-through images, then, is not only *useful* (insofar as it allows a rhetorician to persuade artfully) but also *desirable* (insofar as it brings us into contact with reality, for which we yearn).

18. The preceding point about learning to see *through* images is encapsulated in the lengthy remark with which we began our discussion of images. Just after introducing the capacity to see through images as distinctive and normative for human beings, Socrates says:

Whenever souls [for whom memory of the superheavenly realities is sufficient] behold (*idosin*) a likeness (*homoïoma*) of some one of the things There, they are thoroughly startled (*ekplettontai*) and they are no longer in themselves, and they do not recognize the experience that they are having on account of not perceiving sufficiently (*dia to mē hikanōs diaisthanesthai*). There is no shine in the likenesses here on earth (*en tois teide homoiōmasin*) of justice and moderation and the other things dear to souls, but through the dim organs of the senses a few people, with difficulty, approaching these images (*epi tas eikonas iontes*), behold the original of the thing imaged (*theontai to tou eikasthentos genos*). (250a-b; translation modified)

When souls have a sufficient memory of the superheavenly realities, of which earthly beings are images, they are able not only to see the likeness, but also see *through* the likeness and behold the original “through the dim organs of the senses.” This is possible even for earthly images of realities other than Beauty, though, as we’ve noted, Beauty’s radiance makes it especially accessible via its earthly images, which have a certain luster not found in other earthly images. In principle, any earthly image of a superheavenly reality can be a vehicle by which the soul can behold the image’s original, though, as we said above, our capacity to do so will depend on how well the image reflects its original and how well we are comported to treating the beings of our perceptual experience as diaphanous images rather than self-standing realities. Though we are not initially inclined to sufficiently perceive (*bikanōs diaisthanesthai*) the forms via their earthly images,²⁷ the presence of forms in their earthly images can nevertheless “startle” us out of ourselves, such that our average everyday mode of looking at things as if they were simply present realities is upended, opening us to seeing things anew. Insofar as earthly images have the capacity to “startle” us and drive us outside ourselves toward that which they image, they serve as occasions for divine mania.²⁸ Though the *Phaedrus* seems to

²⁷ Socrates’s use of *diaisthanesthai* is somewhat underdetermined insofar as he doesn’t supply an object of perception in his remark at 250a. Yunis’s gloss on this remark is, I think, right: “because their ability to discern [the underlying Form] is insufficient” (*Phaedrus*, 149; the bracketed phrase is Yunis’s). When we behold the image, we see something of the form in and through the image, but we do not yet have a sufficient grasp on what it is that we are coming to see. The underdetermination of *diaisthanesthai* does, perhaps, open up another possible reading that would complement the point we’ve been developing here. Though there doesn’t seem to be any extant precedent for taking the *dia-* in *diaisthanesthai* in its locative sense (“through”), it seems possible that a native ear could also hear in this remark something like “on account of not sufficiently *seeing-through* [the likeness to the form].” White also countenances this possibility: “The word for perceiving used at 250b, *diaisthanesthai*, has the sense of seeing through the appearance of the thing and into, as it were, the thing’s metaphysical structure” (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 130). See also Gonzalez, “Power and Ambivalence,” 54.

²⁸ Recall that Socrates characterizes the divine form of mania as caused “by a divine upheaval of customary beliefs” (265a). We might say that our “eikonic madness” shakes up the naturalist, materialist, nominalist, and positivist attitudes which often inform the way in which we see what we see. Socrates again uses *ekplēttō* and *diaisthanesthai* together at 255b: “the lover’s kindness being near now astonishes (*ekplēttei*) the boy as he perceives (*diaisthanomen*) how all his other friends [...] do not offer a fraction of

indicate that this mania-inducing startling is a necessary condition for all souls who have fallen to earth to be able to come to see-through images, our capacity to do so is also something that can be cultivated once awakened. This capacity is cultivated specifically by engaging with earthly images, as when we learn to correctly handle reminders (249c) and to collect a plurality of perception into one through an act of reasoning (249b-c).²⁹

19. Socrates later gives a psychological account of our capacity to see-through and why one might fail to do so. When Socrates turns to the “struggle in the soul” and gives some new details about the natures of the two “horse forms” within us, he explains how each aspect of the soul reacts to the soul’s sight of an earthly image of beauty:

“whenever the charioteer beholds (*idōn*) the eyes of his beloved³⁰—the sensation having thoroughly warmed the whole soul—and he begins to feel a tickling and a desire for the goad, the obedient horse, constrained as always by a sense of shame, restrains itself from jumping upon the darling boy. But the other horse no longer minds the charioteer’s goad or the whip as it bounds up and is carried along by force” (253e-254a).

Upon the initial vision of an image of beauty, the soul’s motive forces act according to their untrained tendencies: the obedient horse restrains itself in shame, while the disobedient horse throws itself forward at the object of its desire. At first, the charioteer and the obedient horse are unable to resist the disobedient horse’s wiles; consequently, they yield to its commands and are led by it (*agomenō*; 254b). While the disobedient horse leads, the soul tends toward a

the friendship of his godly-inspired friend.” For the connection of images to divine mania, see also Gonzalez, “Power and Ambivalence,” 52.

²⁹ Later on, Socrates comes back to his brief discussion of collection as a distinctively human capacity (249b) and gives it the name *sunagōgē* (leading-together; 266b). Seeing many dispersed things together (*sunorōnta*), we lead (*agein*) them into a single form (*eis mian idean*; 265d). Socrates claims to be a lover (*erastēs*; 266b) of such leadings-together and the converse power of dividing things form by form (265e) so that he “may have the ability to speak and think” (266b). If, he says, he is led to think (*hēgēsōmai*) that someone is able to see (*horan*) both how many can be brought into one and how one can grow into many, he will “pursue (*diōkō*) him, following ‘right behind in his tracks (*katopisthe met’ ichnion*) as if he were a god” (266b). For some interesting observations of the recurring use of *ichnos* and *ichnion* (track) in the *Phaedrus*, see Edmonds, “Putting Him on a Pedestal.”

³⁰ Yunis notes that *omma* (eye) is used here metaphorically to refer to the beloved as a whole as the lover’s “delight” (*Phaedrus*, 160).

mode of seeing which terminates in the image rather than seeing-through the image to the original, for the disobedient horse sees what it sees only as an object of gratification. The disobedient horse “force[s] them to move toward the darling boy and to recall the delight of sex” (254a). It thereby misinterprets that which it sees by failing to recognize its image-character. Since only the charioteer manages to lift its head up to the Plain of Truth, only the charioteer has seen the forms (247c), and only the charioteer can come to see the form once again by means of the image (254b-c). Consequently, without the charioteer’s guidance, the horses must remain ignorant of the image-character of the beloved upon whom they are looking since they have never seen that of which the beloved is an image. The disobedient horse doesn’t recognize why the image before it is desirable and misinterprets the desirability via the flattened metric of pleasure, whereas the obedient horse doesn’t recognize why the image before it is worthy of reverence but simply obeys.

20. Nevertheless, the soul is “warmed” by the charioteer’s sight of the beautiful beloved, creating the conditions wherein the soul’s wings can regrow (251b). The charioteer’s vision is sufficient for the whole soul’s refledging. As we noted above, this is also the condition under which the soul learns not just to see, but to see-through. As the soul’s members approach the earthly image of beauty under the disobedient horse’s leadership, they all

“see (*eidon*) the darling’s face, flashing like a lightning bolt. With this sight (*idontos*) the charioteer’s memory is carried toward the essence of the beautiful, and once again he sees (*eidon*) beauty itself [...]. Overcome with fear and reverence by the sight (*idonsa*), the charioteer’s memory recoils on its back and is compelled simultaneously to pull back (*belkousai*) on the reins [...].” (254b-c)

Having been “warmed,” the soul now can be “carried” from an image of beauty to Beauty itself, which the soul’s charioteer can now see once more. By seeing Beauty itself, the charioteer remembers that the soul’s proper comportment to Beauty is neither rapacious desire nor prudish holding back but rather a form of reverent desire. The soul seeks to genuinely

commune with Beauty and with the beautiful beloved, and to do so, it must follow (*hepesthai*) “with awe and a sense of shame” (254e); the soul moves toward the object of its desire but it does so reverentially, not rapaciously (Socrates will immediately go on to say that “the lover is no longer pretending but truly feels his servitude;” 255a). Being nourished by “invading draughts of beauty” (251c) and coming to see-through the beloved’s beauty to Beauty itself, the soul’s charioteer recalls itself and regains its reign over the horses, allowing it to utilize both horse’s distinctive capacities (desirous pull, reverential restraint) in its quest to bring the soul into communion with what it sees. By subjecting the disobedient horse to repeated restraint, it trains that horse to “cease its wanton excess,” such that it “follows (*hepetai*) the charioteer’s plan (*pronoia*)” (254e). While a disordered soul can, it seems, be shaken out of its disorder sufficiently by particularly striking images, it needs to regain its proper internal harmony under the charioteer’s direction in order for the soul to become rightly oriented toward the images it sees and sees-through.³¹

21. As we’ve just seen, the same image can be taken different ways depending on the mode of vision with which we attend to it. The ambiguity present in the image is directly related to differences in our souls’ harmonization and orientation. When our souls are in disorder, we tend to fail to see images of the superheavenly things specifically as images (that

³¹ On this point, see Edmonds, “Putting Him on a Pedestal,” 68: “Plato uses this image of two ways of treating an image as an illustration of how-and how not-to treat images in general, whether they be the image of beauty presented by the beautiful beloved or even images of wisdom and justice presented by the writings of a philosopher. In every case, the image must serve as a reminder, a stimulus to recollection and a track that marks the path that memory and reason must follow to arrive at truth, rather than something to be enjoyed as an end in itself. The proper treatment of an image is thus itself an image of the process of recollection, and the ritual actions of adornment, sacrifice, and following in a procession that are appropriate to the treatment of statues of gods become images, not just of how the lover should treat the beautiful beloved, but of how the orator should compose a speech and of the way the philosopher should treat all the images of divine truth that appear in the world. The graphic image of the horse sexually assaulting the boy is likewise an image of what can go wrong when an image is used not as a reminder but as a source of pleasure in itself.” See also Gonzalez, “Power and Ambivalence,” 54-55 and Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 161.

is, as referring to something beyond themselves); rather, our sight terminates in the image itself, and we take it as a self-standing reality. When our souls are thoroughly disordered, we perhaps don't even take the image as a self-standing reality but instead see it specifically in terms of ourselves. A soul in whom the disobedient horse reigns will see earthly images as possible sources of pleasure and pain and will evaluate and engage with those images simply in such terms. A soul in whom the obedient horse reigns (and thus shows itself not to be obedient at all) will see earthly images as possible sources of glory and shame and will evaluate and engage with images through that lens. Since only the charioteer was able to see the superheavenly realities while discarnate, only the charioteer is actually able to see an image for what it is, namely, a likeness of one of the superheavenly realities. In order to both see images for what they are and engage with them rightly, the charioteer needs to be that which directs the soul. We might say, then, that the root cause of our capacity to be misled by images is a lack of rightly-ordered harmony in the soul, for rightly-ordered harmony is the condition for appreciating images for what they are and responding to them accordingly.

22. While it is true that different images are more or less apt to lead us to their originals (e.g., one has "shine," and another does not), the *Phaedrus* seems to indicate that our comportment to images is more significant than the images' particular phenomenal qualities when it comes to whether we are led or misled by them. What it is to *be* an image is to be something which refers to an original, upon which the image is dependent, specifically by being "like" the original, even if this likeness is in some ways distortive insofar as the image and the original have two different modes of existence. If the original of an image is *true* (or "really real"), then the image must display some likeness to truth, however sharply, insofar as it is, in fact, an image. While an artificial image might be misleading if the artificer makes an image of something false, any image ordered to the truth, whether artificial (such as a speech

or a statue) or natural (such as the instance of a form), must bear some resemblance to that truth insofar as the image is actually an image. An image of truth which bore no resemblance to truth would not, in fact, be an image of truth. Accordingly, it seems possible to say that a truth-oriented image—even a dim one that bears a poor likeness to its original—does not itself mislead us on account of its phenomenal properties, for truth cannot mislead qua truth. Rather, if we are misled, the role the image played in the misleading was to be the occasion for being misled rather than the cause of our being misled. We mislead *ourselves* by failing to attend to the image at hand *as* an image and by disposing others to do so. Insofar as we fail to adequately attend to the image-character of the image, whether through ignorance, inattentiveness, or corruption, we lead ourselves astray by failing to recognize the fact that images always refer to something beyond themselves, always fall short of that to which they refer, and always add something in their presentation that may be alien to the original (as when a temporal image of something eternal visualizes something eternal as if it were in time, thus allowing for temporal distinctions that don't actually obtain in the original). Images, like writing, are inanimate even though they “stand there as if alive” (275d); like writing, images can't change how they present themselves to us and don't respond to our questions (275d-e). Accordingly, they don't have the agency to mislead us but are instead the occasions for us to mislead ourselves when we fail to attend to them as images.

23. We are particularly apt to mislead ourselves by images, or to be misled by unscrupulous image-wielders, when we take the image *as if* it were the whole phenomenon (i.e., as the original itself, or a copy thereof).³² This occurs when we fail to appreciate the vertical distinction between image and original. While an image of Beauty can be said to be

³² Cf. Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 161-162.

beautiful (recall 274a-b), it can't be said to be *the* beautiful; it can only be said to be beautiful so long as we recognize its beauty as analogous to and participatory in Beauty itself. When, for example, Phaedrus admires the "beauty" of Lysias's speech, he explicitly does so by attending only to one of the relevant aspects in which it could be beautiful. Socrates playfully chastises Phaedrus for attending only to the speech's "clear, compact, and well-turned" phrases and not to whether Lysias "said what needed to be said" (234e). Phaedrus absolutizes the clever phrasing and the urbanity of its claim (227c), irrespective of its truth-value. And because Phaedrus doesn't (yet) remember the truth about Love and Beauty that he must have seen long ago before he came to be upon the earth, he is unable to recognize that the "beauty" contained in Lysias's speech is indeed a poor image of Beauty, if it is indeed an image of Beauty at all, for even the aspect Phaedrus absolutizes—rhetorical cleverness—is inadequate (235a).

24. As we saw in Ch. 5 (§3), Phaedrus is inordinately prone to seeking pleasure from speeches. We might suggest, in light of what's been said, that Phaedrus has difficulty recognizing the image-character of images of beauty in speech because he's prone to allowing his disobedient horse to call the shots. But as we saw in Ch. 2, when the soul is ordered specifically to desire for pleasure, it only grasps the surfaces of things and fails to recognize the depths behind them. The humanly-sick lover, who is interested in beauty specifically as a way of satiating his pleasure-lust, doesn't actually care about *beauty*; rather, he cares about the *appearance* of beauty (see 239c-d). The disobedient horse, insofar as he is untrained, likewise can't care for beauty *as* beauty, but only for beauty as a potential source of pleasure. The soul stricken by pleasure-lust is not actually interested in beauty but is instead interested in whatever could be a cause of pleasure; but since pleasure has a reality-resistant tendency, there's a sense in which *anything* could be pursued as such a cause, and so beauty's role here is more of a stand-in than actually what elicits the pleasure-luster's acts. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to say

that it is not the beautiful image which misleads the pleasure-lusting soul, but instead that the beautiful image merely serves as an occasion for the pleasure-lusting soul to do the kind of thing to which it is inclined, regardless of what's before it. Nor does Beauty itself mislead. If Phaedrus is misled, it is not *by* Beauty itself or by a particular beautiful image; rather, Phaedrus misleads himself, or allows himself to be misled, insofar as he fails to attend to the fact that this particular image of Beauty is an image which inevitably fails to exhaust Beauty.³³ And, to deploy the same argumentative strategy we've used before, we must say that if Beauty is divine, which it surely is (246e), then it "could not be bad in any way" (242e). Beauty *itself* cannot mislead, even if we can mislead ourselves by improperly handling beautiful images.³⁴

§2.4. Icons, Idols, Prisms

25. At the risk of utilizing concepts whose origins lie elsewhere, we can employ the distinction between "icon" and "idol" as a shorthand for the distinction we've been drawing between different ways of handling images.³⁵ I am utilizing these terms to draw a distinction between two fundamental modes of intentionality an image can have; analogous distinctions have been used by other commentators.³⁶ The distinction will also come in handy when we

³³ Recall that Phaedrus is convinced, for most of the dialogue, of the perfection of Lysias's speech. He considers it "extraordinary" (234c) and challenges Socrates to think of anyone who made a better speech on the same theme (234e). He responds to Socrates's critique by saying "Rubbish, Socrates; the material was handled extremely well. He didn't leave out any of the items that are naturally implied by the topic, and everything was given worthy treatment, so that no one could add to what he said or say more or say it better" (235b). Even after the Palinode, Phaedrus expresses hesitation that Lysias had actually been upstaged ("It's actually made me feel anxious lest Lysias seem second-rate by comparison;" 257c).

³⁴ See also Gonzalez, "Power and Ambivalence," 64: "Because beauty, as Socrates explains in the *Phaedrus*, is characterized by an immanent transcendence, it can make of the image something that both attracts to itself and points beyond itself. The image thereby becomes both promising and dangerous and demands both love and critique."

³⁵ I am here not suggesting that Plato consistently draws a distinction between *eikōn* and *eidōlon* (nor am I appealing to particular religious content or the senses appended to the terms by Jean-Luc Marion, who is largely responsible for the terms' utilization in a philosophical context). Cf. Desjardins, *Plato and the Good*, 209, note 7.

³⁶ Cf. Burger, *Defense of Writing*, 53. In *Self-Knowledge*, Griswold suggests that Lysianic writing is fundamentally idolatrous (50ff.) and that Homer remains blind on account of his inability to distinguish

discuss the nature of writing in §4. By *idol*, I mean an image which *arrests* the perceiver's vision—essentially, an image which says “don't look past me; *I* am the truth.”³⁷ The idol *demand*s that we take it as absolute.³⁸ By *icon*, on the other hand, I mean an image which transports the perceiver's vision—essentially, an image which says “while I am a something that you can perceive, there's something beyond me that you can perceive through me (cf. 250b). Look at *it*.” Though the icon is a reality to which I can—and should—attend, I fail to take the icon *as* icon the moment I fail to heed its invitation to look past it. Whereas an idol denies its intentionality *per se*, and thus tries to prevent the perceiver from asking “of what is this an image?”, an icon presents both itself and that of which it is an image.³⁹ The icon presents itself as a “task to be accomplished.”⁴⁰ Insofar as an image is ontologically constituted by its dependence on that of which it is an image, then we have warrant to state that images are *per se* iconic and only *per accidens* idolatrous. Every image, insofar as it is an image, points beyond itself to the reality upon which it depends; it is only through human ignorance (abetted, perhaps, by knavery) that an image is *viewed* idolatrously (though it is undeniable that there are certain types of images about which we tend to be confused).⁴¹

idols from images (73). Likewise, “the growth of the wings is initially stimulated by physical icons of beauty” (124). See also Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, ch. 6.

³⁷ Cf. White, *Rhetoric and reality*, 130: “A ‘percept’ of a beautiful thing, if separated from the metaphysical ultimate which engendered it, becomes an unnatural abstraction for this approach to perception.”

³⁸ Cf. William Desmond, *Hegel's God*, ix: “An idol is no less an idol for being wrought from thought and concepts as from stone or gold or mud.”

³⁹ The distinction Socrates draws between how those who are “dreaming” and those who are “awake” engage with likenesses (*to homoion*) at *Republic* 476c-d (echoed, perhaps, at *Phaedrus* 277d) runs parallel to the distinction we are drawing here between idols and icons. “Dreamers” think that the likeness *is* the thing itself to which the likeness is like, whereas those who are “awake” recognize a distinction between the likeness and that to which the likeness is like and are able to see how the former participate in the latter. For discussion, see Gonzalez, “Power and Ambivalence,” 49. Similarly, see McCoy, *Image and Argument*, 183ff.

⁴⁰ Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 139. Cf. Sophist 240b-c.

⁴¹ See the thorough discussion of how the body can deceive us into taking it as an idol in Jones and Marechal, “Plato's Guide to Living with Your Body.” See also Schindler, *Catholicity*, 120-129.

26. As we've seen, images are constituted, paradoxically, by necessarily falling short of that which they image, even as they add to it. Like *erōs*, the image appears to be the child of "poverty" and "resource" (cf. *Symposium* 203b). If an image didn't fall short of that which it images, there would be no vertical dimension, and the image would just be a copy, with no essential reference to that *of* which it is an image since it would present the same reality fully (better said: it would *be* the same reality, except numerically). But the other pole of the paradox is equally crucial for the argument we will develop: though an image cannot express the fullness of that of which it is an image, it somehow *adds* something to that which it images in its difference.⁴² Previously, we've spoken of this "additive" dimension as if it were an alien accretion that distorted the image's presentation of the original, and this is undoubtedly true. Nevertheless, there's also a positive sense of the "additive" dimension, wherein the image's imaging somehow adds to the original by being that by which the original magnifies itself (as when Beauty descends into images and thus becomes, in a certain sense, more than itself). How, then, can we understand both dimensions of the image within Platonic thought?

27. The two dimensions of the image—the way in which it both falls short of yet adds to the thing imaged—reflect two fundamental dimensions of Beauty: being iconic and being prismatic. The indigence of the image—reflective of the indigence (or "poverty") of human nature which spurs its erotic strivings for that which will nourish it—is the correlate to Beauty's iconicity. Images necessarily fall short of that of which they are the image because they present that which they image in a "lower" mode, inadequate to the fullness of the things of which they are images. Beauty presents itself in relative images which arrest our vision so that we

⁴² Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 134.

may see not just this beautiful thing, but Beauty itself (cf. 254b).⁴³ Though beautiful things are indeed beautiful, they are not Beauty itself; they fall short of Beauty itself because they cannot exhaust Beauty itself, which remains transcendent to them even as it is immanent to them.⁴⁴ Just as images are *per se* iconic and only *per accidens* idolatrous, so do beautiful things *per se* disclose Beauty and only *per accidens* fail to do so. Images serve as the place of our encounter with originals which are (initially) inaccessible to us. Likewise, Beauty, by being more radiant than the other true beings, is the place of our encounter with reality itself (cf. 250a-e).⁴⁵

28. On the other hand, the plenitude of the image—reflective of the plenitude (or “resource”) of human nature by which we commune with that which we love—is the correlate to Beauty’s prismatic character. Images add to that of which they are the image in that they present the original’s content in a new mode, thereby making that content accessible in a new way, as when the architect’s blueprint is actualized in *this* particular building. Images, in a certain sense, “individuate” the original’s content, and in doing so, the image reframes the original’s content, drawing out certain features and suggesting new perspectives. Most importantly, images of the intelligible present the intelligible in the mode of sensation, so that perceiving beings can perceive what’s intelligible according to their capacity as perceiving beings.⁴⁶ This is what makes images such useful teaching aids. Images can be particularly apt soul-leaders (or the instruments of soul-leaders) on account of their capacity to be tailored to the needs, concerns, and situation of the viewer. While images cannot so tailor themselves, an image-wielder can do so within a living dialogue. Because images have the nature of icons

⁴³ Whereas icons arrest our vision in the sense that they demand that we don’t look away until we see something *through* them, idols arrest our vision simply; icons, we could say, “focus” our vision so that we see-through, whereas idols blind us to all else.

⁴⁴ Cf. Perl, *Thinking Being*, 31.

⁴⁵ Cf. Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Predicament: Rediscovering the Real in Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 39-41, 46.

⁴⁶ See especially Perl, *Thinking Being*, 34-38.

rather than of copies, the same content in the original can be presented in multiple ways without falsification of the original. No particular features of an image are absolute, because images are relative in their very being; accordingly, there's always a new way to present the original content in a new image, better tailored to the image-viewer's soul.

29. While the image functions as the prism itself through which light is differentiated into a spectrum, Beauty itself *is* the light so differentiated. Hence, we are calling Beauty “prismatic” because, in its descent into images, it shines through these images and differentiates itself into the multitude of beautiful things. In doing so, Beauty is individuated by the particular features of each beautiful thing. None of those beauties contain the whole of Beauty, but Beauty is present as a whole to each. In its descent into images, Beauty picks up “new” characters as it presents itself in ever new ways when it is concretized and instantiated in particular images. Beauty can only present its fullness phenomenally by being limited by individuation in a myriad of ways. The Renaissance Platonist Marsilio Ficino gives an illustrative example of the point at hand: “A variegated cloud, having received the ray of the sun, may likewise produce various colors in itself. So the simple fact of the cloud's shining derives effectively from the sun; but the fact of the cloud's reflecting a particular color derives, at least formally, from itself.”⁴⁷ As the light shines through the prism, the light itself takes on new characters, but the light is still the light, even if it is not the light “itself by itself;” likewise, as Beauty shines through the images, it takes on new characters. In doing so, it remains Beauty, even if it is no longer “itself by itself.”

§3. The Metaphysics of Beauty and Communion with Reality

⁴⁷ Ficino, *Commentary*, VI.3.

§3.1. Beauty's Descent

1. Being, as we said above, makes the first move in the divine dance. It inaugurates the dance by giving itself over to us in radiant images, images which function as so many invitations to join the divine dance. As Schindler has noted, “for Plato, ontology is *semiotics*. Being an image is what makes a thing *real*.”⁴⁸ Images are what they are by presenting what they image in a new mode (e.g., the intelligible content of a reality is present perceptually in an image of that reality). Phenomenal beings, which are images of the realities beyond the heavens, are what they are—and *are* at all—by virtue of their participation in the superheavenly realities, which the phenomenal beings themselves present perceptually. Because every image presents the reality it images, each image is a locus wherein we can have a mediated contact with the reality imaged, and it is in this sense that we can think of images as “invitations” to join in the divine dance, for they present a foretaste of the contact with the realities to be known at the summit of the divine ascent in a mode more accessible to us (through perception). In doing so, images can awaken our desire to come into communion with the true beings. The things of our experience can’t reveal themselves to us for what they are unless we see them as images pointing toward that of which they are images (the prisoner in the cave only sees the shadows *as* shadows once she turns around and looks at that which casts the shadows). Responding to reality’s invitation requires recognizing the image-character of the things of our experience and tracing those images back to their sources. This, as we’ve said, is difficult for us to the extent that we are not internally harmonized and thereby able to view images from the right perspective.

⁴⁸ Schindler, *Catholicity*, 123.

2. Reality, however, is equipped with a way of *breaking through* our everyday ensnarement in deficient understandings of the images of our experience: the brilliance of Beauty.⁴⁹ We see the in-breaking aspect of Beauty both in its characterization and in its effects. Beauty, unlike the other “lovely forms,” is distinguished by being “naturally the most clearly visible and the most lovely” (250e). Whereas images of the other forms have “no shine” on earth (250a) and consequently tend to fail to enrapture those who see them (with the result that those who are not yet enraptured fail to recognize that the images are, in fact, images), Beauty presents itself immediately to the eye in and through its earthly images.⁵⁰ Whereas ordinary images tend to arrest our gaze in the sense that they fail to point beyond themselves to that of which they are an image, images of Beauty tend to arrest our gaze in a wholly different sense: they *won't allow us to look away* without seeing something of Beauty in them (proportionately, perhaps, to the state of our formation upon beholding the beautiful image). As we continue to look at images of Beauty, the soul is “warmed” by Beauty’s “invading draughts” (251b-c), and the soul begins to heal and regrow its wings so that it can be led up to the superheavenly realities. Beauty “flashes” forth, “like a lightning bolt” in the beautiful image (254b) and carries our thought back in memory “toward the essence of the beautiful” so that we can see it once again (254b). In doing so, Beauty inspires “fear and reverence” in the beholder, such that one is drawn into the tension of a contradictory pair of motions: one

⁴⁹ For parallel claims with respect to the *Republic*, see Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, Ch. 3. Schindler argues that “while we must aim to understand the image, the act that attempts to grasp the image must be ‘broken into’ from above by the reality that gives it its intelligibility. The ascent of thought can come to completion as an ascent only by being interrupted by a descent from above” (148-149). It should also be noted (as we saw in Ch. 3), that divine mania can “break into” our experience and redirect us, but since, as we’ll argue here, the gods do what they do on account of Beauty, we can focus on the root cause rather than the proximate cause.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 147 for the significance of the fact that beauty’s self-presentation takes hold of us immediately (*exaiphnēs*). See also Tanja Staehler, “The Refuge of the Good in the Beautiful,” *Epoché*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2015) for discussion of this point and its relevance to the way in which the Good tends to “take refuge” in the Beautiful in Plato (cf. *Philebus* 64e).

is simultaneously pulled toward the Beautiful as an object of desire and yet holds back from the beautiful as an object of reverence (254b-e; cf. 250e-252a). The soul in whom Beauty has inspired “fear and reverence” is simultaneously unwilling to be deprived of beauty (252a) and unwilling to trample over what’s beautiful in rapacious desire (254b-c).

3. By holding us in this tense suspension, Beauty opens a new possibility for the soul who remains in civil war. The seditious soul is one in which the motive forces (particularly wanton desire for pleasure) rebel against reason’s hegemony and against each other. Consequently, such a soul posits for itself contradictory aims and, like Phaedrus, bifurcates itself by going in two different directions (see 257b). Beauty mediates this disagreement by showing the soul, as if for the first time, that *each* of the soul’s ends are achievable (but only by respecting the soul’s natural order)—we can genuinely enjoy the pleasure that attends beauty and genuinely respect the beautiful beloved’s well-being only if we also recognize Beauty itself and live a life structured by this recognition.⁵¹ Beauty thus makes a claim on the soul: *this is how reality really is*, and this is how you ought to be in response. In the experience of Beauty, we can no longer be indifferent but must make a choice about how we’ll respond.⁵² But Beauty’s evocative character is also what makes it decidedly *dangerous* for disharmonized

⁵¹ As Werner has rightly noted, an implication of the fact that the soul’s charioteer is able to see the superheavenly realities whereas the soul’s horses are not able to do so is that the charioteer cannot persuade the horses to follow its lead (exclusively) by appeal to truth. “If the charioteer is to be successful in talking to the lower parts and in persuading them to accept its rule, then *it must frame its discourse in terms that the lower parts value and understand*” (*Myth and Philosophy*, 67), that is, in terms of their own particular interests and by means of perception and discursive (as opposed to receptive, intuitive) reason. Here we are in a position to add something to Werner’s analysis: since Beauty itself is distinct from the other lovely forms in its *perceptual* character, it is in principle a “common term” for any “intrapersonal” communication that takes place in the soul. The motive forces both have perceptual recognition of beauty and tendencies to orient themselves toward beauty (the obedient horse holds back in reverent restraint, and the wanton horse pushes forward in lusty desire). Because of this, the charioteer has an excellent line of argument by which it can unify the soul: “both of you motive forces are to some extent right in your orientations toward beauty, and if you allow me to direct you, both of you will fulfill your desire, for we will jointly revere and approach beauty, neither prudishly holding back nor rapaciously jumping forward.”

⁵² Cf. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 146-149.

souls. Beauty can harmonize the soul because it can appeal to the soul as a whole in its self-presentation in a perceptual mode, even if only the charioteer really understands what the soul is perceiving in the beautiful image. For a soul in which the charioteer is habitually dragged about by the horses who, by nature, can't recognize Beauty in a beautiful image (even if they can be affected by the sight), the evocative character is liable to spur the horses' movements without any direction by the charioteer. Since Beauty affects us so strongly at the affective level, we can be misled by our affective responses to Beauty,⁵³ but, as we've said, Beauty itself is not misleading us so much as we are allowing our horses' misapprehension of the beautiful image to direct us toward the beautiful image in the mode of idolatry. Our best defense against this danger is to work toward the proper internal harmony of the soul, something to which the experience of Beauty in the beautiful image itself contributes as it "warms" us and provides the condition under which our "wings" can regrow.

4. The dialogue subtly prepares us for the way in which Beauty "breaks in" and thereby invites us into the divine dance by situating all but the first three or so pages of the dialogue under the shaded bower to which Socrates refers using the rare word *katagōgē* (230b) and its lexical neighbor *katagōgion* (259b).⁵⁴ Etymologically, a *katagōgē* is a "leading-down;" by using this word within a cluster of ten uses of 'agogic' terms within the four Stephanus pages of the dialogue's prologue, Socrates calls attention to its roots (*kata* + *agein*). While we might

⁵³ Recall that two of Plato's uses of psychagogic terms occur in exactly this context: Timaeus explains that the demiurge crafted certain features of our bodily constitution in order to mitigate the fact that the affective aspects of our souls, to the extent that they aren't corralled by reason, "would, at night and by day, fall readily under the spell (*psuchagōgēsōito*) of images and phantasms (*eidōlōn kai phantasmātōn*)" (*Timaeus* 71a). Socrates elsewhere comments on the "great power where reputation is concerned" that poets have and can deploy when writing about people, especially using tragedy, "that form of poetry which most delights the populace and which most seduces (*psuchagōgikōtaton*) the soul" (*Minos* 321a; trans. Malcolm Schofield, *Complete Works*).

⁵⁴ Recall that neither of these terms appears elsewhere in the Platonic corpus. Here, we are building on the interpretation of the thematic significance of the *katagōgē* we begun in Ch. 5, §2.2.

colloquially translate *katagōgē* as “resting-place,” given the horizon of interpretation we’ve proposed, we must pay attention to this word’s etymology and translate more literally, so that its connection with other agogic language and its particular strangeness in the dialogue are not obscured. Why would Plato choose this word, and why would he situate it among so many closely related words?

5. Given the abundance of agogic terms and given the ways in which agogic terms have taken on critical roles throughout the dialogue (culminating in soul-leading toward the end), we should recognize that the choice of such a rare word is not neutral. The fact that Plato uses a word with a direct etymological connection to soul-leading instead of some ordinary or even poetic term without such a connection is significant. But if the basic logic of the leading-relation requires a leader, a follower, a whence, and a whither, as well as, perhaps, a for the sake of which, then Plato’s use of an agogic term here invites us to speculate about these different elements as relevant for the term Plato used to describe the very setting of the vast majority of the dialogue. The locative aspects are already given some sense by *kata-* (downward), and so we know that the grove, whatever else it is, has some connection to something “above” it, from which comes whatever is being led.⁵⁵ The Palinode’s myth fills in the spatial metaphor by depicting Zeus leading an army of gods, *daimonia*, and human souls from the heavens to a place out beyond the heavens. We are retrospectively invited to see whatever is being led to the *katagōgē* as being led from the superheavenly place, from really real reality itself, back down to earth, the place of our phenomenal experience. Socrates’s frequent references to being possessed by the various local deities during his first speech suggest that

⁵⁵ As Perl notes, it’s important to keep in mind that the spatial language of “place” (or “realm”), “upward,” and “downward” is *metaphorical*; cf. *Thinking Being*, 30, 39. This is important for understanding what “separation” (*chōrismos*) entails; see *ibid.*, 27-34.

the grove, whatever else it is, is a meeting-place of the divine and the mundane. Given that the gods are later depicted as leading human beings, we might be inclined to think that the *katagōgē* is likewise a place at which the gods can meet human beings and thus begin to lead them. Doubtless this is true, but if that's the whole explanation, we should be puzzled by the fact that it is a *kata-gōgē* rather than an *ana-gōgion* (since the gods will, in the Palinode at least, be leading human souls *up* rather than down) or an *aktērion* (if Plato wanted to coin a term by analogy to *dikastērion*, the place in which justice takes place). No immediate parallel in the imagery or content of the *Phaedrus* for something leading something else downward suggests itself, and so the puzzle remains unless we can find a reasonable sense for why Plato sets the dialogue within the leading-down place.⁵⁶

6. I suggest that we rethink the sense of the *katagōgē* from the perspective of the metaphysics of Beauty and images. When we do, we get a more sensible root understanding at work in the seemingly innocuous term, another way by which the prologue foreshadows later themes, and a *positive* account of why the gods would descend in the first place. The *katagōgē* is indeed the place where the divine *breaks in* most directly and, on account of this in-breaking, it is a place where we can encounter the gods and thus begin to follow them wherever they lead. But the *katagōgē* is, more fundamentally, the place *to which* the gods have *themselves*

⁵⁶ Neither *katagein* nor *kathēgeomai*, the verbs which etymologically indicate the act of leading downwardly, are used in the *Phaedrus*; where these words are used elsewhere in Plato, they don't foreground their downward aspect. Hermias uses *katagein* and *katagōgos* in their etymological sense in a number of places in his commentary in a way that is consistent with a plausible interpretation of Plato's overall message; cf., e.g., *Scholia* 23.22-23: "[...] the business for Socrates, the doctor of souls, is the hearing of discourses [in order to judge] which are true and which deceptive, which lead up (*anagōgoi*) the soul and which lead down (*katagōgoi*)" (translation modified). Nevertheless, Plato himself did not choose to speak of (sophistical) speeches or speech-makers as being "katagogues" (down-leaders), nor did he describe humanly-sick love or predatory non-love as "katagogic," preferring, in general to speak of such things as "misleading" or "leading astray." Accordingly, "katagogy" is reserved in this dialogue for the two references to the divinely-haunted bower and whatever takes place there.

been led. *Beauty itself* leads the gods down to the grove by means of its radiant images to this beautiful place, itself a radiant image of Beauty.⁵⁷

7. Even granting that Beauty itself casts forth radiant images, in what sense can we say that Beauty leads the gods by means of those radiant images? Because the gods are perfectly oriented to what's good, true, and beautiful, they are always in right relation to what's good, true, and beautiful (they've made these arch-structures of existence the "gravitational center" of their existence). But being in right relation to the beautiful is to love the beautiful as some primary, inexhaustible value to be valued for its own sake (that is, to be in right relation to the beautiful is to recognize it for what it is and love it accordingly). As Diotima claims in the *Symposium*, one who has been "tutored" in love-matters and "beholds beautiful things in order and correctly" (210e) or who is "led (*agesthai*) there by another" (211c) will be drawn to Beauty Itself, what we might call absolute beauty. One doesn't engage with beauty rightly unless by coming to Beauty Itself (recall the corrupt vs. the recently initiated at 250e), and since the gods do engage rightly, they are so drawn (unlike human souls, they don't need to learn how to love things in order, for they are already rightly attuned). The gods' perpetual nearness to these arch-structures of reality is, in fact, what makes them divine (cf. 246e, 249c). They are divine by being attuned to and near what's divine; by implication, we can say that only the superheavenly beings are divine *per se*, whereas the gods are divine analogously, by a perfect participation. The gods are thus models for our own relation to Beauty; while we will never

⁵⁷ The radiant nature of Beauty is underscored by the imagery used to depict "the beautiful resting-place" (230b). As we noted in Ch. 5, the beautiful resting place overwhelms the senses. Beyond this, we hear that the plane-tree is "tall" and has "wonderfully spreading branches;" both descriptors indicate that the tree is vivaciously spreading itself outward. The "tall willow shrub" is "diffusing through the place a most sweet perfume," thus presenting itself to others at a distance. The stream, the breeze, and the grassy slope all contribute to a sense of the place's "outflow" beyond itself; the scene thus gives us an image of Beauty which points to Beauty's self-diffusive nature. Doing so, the scene foreshadows the way in which Beauty will "flow" into the lover and the beloved through their eyes in the Palinode.

have an orientation toward Beauty that is free of fragility and the possibility of falling away, we can, like the gods, be properly oriented, though our mode of doing so will require constant renewal of our commitments (see Ch. 3).⁵⁸ While the gods are not ultimate objects of love, they are to be loved and they can mediate our love of what is ultimate.⁵⁹

8. But what does it mean to come to Beauty Itself? If the relationship between Beauty and the various beauties is one of participation (as Plato seems to think), wherein each participant “shares with” (*met-hexis*) the participated the character of the participated, then each participant “has a share of” the participated. While the participated is irreducible to any (or even the sum) of the participants, it is nevertheless present as a whole in each of the participants, like a day, “which, although one and the same, is many places at once and is not at all separate from itself” (*Parmenides* 131b). The gods, in their perfect orientation to Beauty,

⁵⁸ Socrates says that those who “make contact with a god through memory” are “possessed (*enthousiōntes*) by him and pick up (*lambanousi*) his habits and practices to the extent that humans can share in (*metaschein*) the divine” (253a). By partaking (*metechein*) of the god’s habits and practices, we partake of their participation in divinity.

⁵⁹ See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 56. There is, perhaps, a difficulty in suggesting that the gods are objects of love (even with the caveat that they are not the *ultimate* objects of love), for, as commentators have noted, there doesn’t seem to be much pre-Aristotelian precedent for loving the gods in Greek thought; cf., e.g., John Rist, *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus, and Origen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 23. Rist further summarizes what is probably the standard view on this question with respect to Plato: “In at least one passage of Plato [i.e., *Euthyphro* 10aff.] we seem to be justified in believing that we have little cause to love the Gods. After all, they are only doing what we are trying to do. They are not to be our objects of devotion. That honour is to be reserved for the Forms. We are not then to love the Gods, but Wisdom and the Forms” (ibid). While Plato doesn’t seem to suggest that we should have *erōs* for the gods in any particular passage (though there are suggestions that we should “serve” or “care” for the gods in both the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology*), love of the gods does seem to follow from the analyses of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, for if *erōs* is always of the good (and beautiful), and if the gods are perfectly good if they *are* at all (cf. 242e, 246e), then it would seem to follow that in wanting to love the whole of the good, we would want to love the gods as maximal instantiations of the good. We cannot love the *whole* of the good without loving whatever is good. It also seems natural to suggest that we follow the gods to the superheavenly place on account of our *erōs*, though, of course, our *erōs* doesn’t—and shouldn’t—terminate in the gods. If each of us “chooses his Love from among the beautiful after his own tastes” (252d), and if each “search for a beloved” who has the properties of the god whom he followed (252e), it would seem plausible to say that each of us chooses our beloveds after the gods whom we loved (as when Socrates suggests that some lovers are “fiercely driven to gaze upon the god” whom they followed; 253a).

love the *whole* of Beauty. Since the participant beauties partake of Beauty, the gods must also love those relative beauties *in order to love the whole of Beauty as a whole*, for Beauty is present (*parousia*) to and communes (*koinōnia*) with the relative beauties (cf. *Phaedo* 100d).⁶⁰

9. The fact that the gods' love of Beauty entails loving the beautiful images to which Beauty is present gives us an answer to a further puzzling question: if the gods are perfectly ordered to reality and can make the ascent with ease, *why* would they descend in the first place? We might think that they do so on account of a humanitarian aid mission, and doubtless they do, for this is implied in the fact that the gods care for all. Recall that "every soul takes care of everything which is soulless" (246b) and that "the great leader in heaven, Zeus, takes the lead, [...] arranging everything thoroughly and taking care of it" (246e). But this answer doesn't explain *why* the gods take care of things beneath them but merely describes their habitual way of acting. We might also think that though the gods are perfectly oriented, they are still in some sense incomplete and thus cannot exist simply as form. As we saw in Ch. 3, when Socrates says "all souls, everyone of them, leave the sight of Being, unfulfilled" (248b), the "all souls" refers not only to all human souls, nor even all mortal souls, but to all souls *simpliciter*, thus including divine souls. There, we argued that the Palinode includes divine souls in this way to indicate the fundamental ontological distinction between the forms, which are truly divine and truly at home in the superheavenly place, and everything else that exists, which is ontologically dependent on "really real reality" and the things in the superheavenly place. Accordingly, the distinction between human soul and divine soul is one of degree of perfection rather than one of kind (the gods *are* perfect in their perfect orientation to truth, whereas

⁶⁰ On this point, see Schindler, "Problem of Love." Schindler argues that the absolute, if it is to be truly absolute, must be inclusive of the relative rather than opposed to it (even if the relative can oppose itself to the absolute). Accordingly, if we are to come to love absolute Beauty *absolutely*, we must also love relative beauties.

human souls are contingently *perfectible* insofar as they can continually commit and recommit to truth). But even in their perfection, the gods are not the kind of things that can remain in the superheavenly place as if they were forms. Unlike the prior answer, this kind of answer to the question of why the gods go back down suffices to explain why the gods don't remain above the heavens (on account of an inability to persistently live in a superheavenly mode), but it doesn't tell us why the gods habitually act with a downwardly oriented care. Why characterize the gods' acts as motivated by care if the real reason the gods can't remain in the superheavenly place is a kind of incompleteness which causes them to fall away? Rather, a more satisfying answer is that the gods *descend out of love for the Beautiful*. The gods' action is their own action (i.e., they choose to go back down rather than fall away out of incapacity), motivated by their own desire (they *want* to go down in order to most completely commune with Beauty, which has always already dispersed itself "below" the superheavenly region).

10. If loving absolute Beauty absolutely *entails* loving relative beauties, then we have good reason to reinterpret Socrates's noteworthy remark that "all souls, everyone of them, leave the sight of Being unfulfilled" (248b). We have another, more profound reason than inadequacy to recognize why *even divine souls* leave the superheavenly place unfulfilled: Beauty itself is *not confined* to the superheavenly place but instead has diffused itself throughout the cosmos. Accordingly, any soul that sought to see Beauty itself *simply* would be unfulfilled, for Beauty is never *simply* itself but always also in others (recall *Parmenides* 131b cited above). The gods leave the sight of Beauty in order to continue seeing Beauty in all of its self-diffusion, for Beauty is always out beyond itself.⁶¹ This is why, later on, Socrates can say confidently in

⁶¹ If the prior remarks hold, then we have some reason for reinterpreting another phrase in Socrates's remark at 248b: "In spite of this great effort, all souls, everyone of them, leave the sight of being, unfulfilled, and, once departed, feed on the food of conjecture (*trophēi doxastēi*)." "Conjecture" is a fitting translation for *doxastos* and it suits the recurring Platonic judgment that earthly images and our

response to Phaedrus's worry about the impossibility of the genuine rhetorical art Socrates has outlined that "even in reaching for the beautiful there is beauty, and also in suffering whatever it is that one suffers en route" (274a-b).

11. Since Beauty, in its radiance, has always given itself away, the gods must follow Beauty in its descent into relative images in order to love Beauty wholly. The gods' ascent to Beauty can only be completed in an appreciation of Beauty's self-presentation in others. So the gods must come back down to love Beauty in its images; in this sense, we can say that Beauty *leads down* (*katagōgē*) the gods in its own descent into images, and the gods happily follow Beauty's lead.⁶² The gods chase beauty all the way down just as the philosopher must chase Goodness all the way down to the furthest reaches of the cave, for the Good penetrates even to those furthest reaches, and the philosopher cannot love the Good as a whole unless she loves the Good in all things, for all things are of the Good. One cannot love Beauty itself

opinions (*doxai*) of them are inferior when compared to the true realities and knowledge of them. But if the "seeming" sense of *dokein* (as, e.g., at *Gorgias* 527b), the root of *doxastos*, is elevated, we might translate the remark as "on the food of seeming" or "on the food of appearance." Given that the extension of the preceding remark is truly *all* souls—both mortal and divine—we'd have to consider in what sense one could speak of the gods as feeding on the food of conjecture. While the most natural reading of the remark is to hear in it a reference to humans souls struggling for knowledge, failing, and falling back into opinion, the preceding analysis has given us a new possibility which would allow us to include the gods without compromising their divinity: the gods leave the sight of Being unfulfilled because, as we've argued (with respect to Beauty, but the point generalizes), Being isn't restricted to simply Being in itself but has always already given itself away to what is *not* Being itself. But since the gods have perfect love, they follow Being's self-diffusion down into images of Being and there continue to "feed" on Being. At the acme of the ascent, they feed on Being *as* Being, but as they descend, they feed on Being *as* appearance. If so, then human souls, too, may have a *positive* relation to appearances as a source of nourishment even though appearances by themselves will never be adequate for fulfillment.

⁶² Given that the *Phaedrus* presents the gods as if they are species of soul, differentiated from "mortal" souls by their deathlessness in the sense that the gods, unlike other souls, never inhabit mortal *bodies* (see 246a-d), we can see that "soul-leading" applies even to the ways in which the gods' souls are themselves led, consonant with our prior claims about the way in which the gods' way of leading us is by mediating the way in which reality leads us. The gods themselves are led by reality, especially Beauty, which is the ultimate soul-leader. McCoy rightly notes that "the Palinode shows that the forms have an almost gravitational pull," on account of which we could say that "the forms are the real 'rhetoricians;' they alone have the power to move the soul" (*Plato on Rhetoric*, 191). In a similar way, Kosman speaks of the "rhetoric of being;" see "Beauty and the Good: Situating the Kalon," *Classical Philology*, Vol. 105 (2010), 354.

without also loving (or at least being disposed to love) all of the beautiful things. In a word, one's ecstatic, anagogic *erōs* for Beauty itself culminates, when followed all the way to its end, in a "katagogic" *care* (*epimeleia, therapeia*) for relative beauties, for one does not love Beauty wholly until one loves Beauty in all beautiful things. While to say "I love Beauty in preference to beautiful things" is sensible, to say "I love Beauty, but not beautiful things" would be a mark of confusion.

12. We might then generalize the preceding point by saying that the more something is genuinely erotic, the more it is genuinely "epimeletic" (or caring, in a "downward" fashion). Zeus's most perfect *erōs* for Beauty (signaled by his being "the great leader" who guides all upward toward Beauty) culminates in his most perfect care for *all things* (246e). Zeus is maximally erotic and reveals himself to be maximally epimeletic. As we saw in Ch. 4, the same point holds for the divinely mad lover, who is first driven by his sight of a beautiful image (the beloved's face) to be led up and back to Beauty itself and, upon making this memorial contact, is then driven back down to genuinely care for his beloved. The erotically mad lover is genuinely erotic and subsequently reveals himself to be genuinely epimeletic *because* he has become genuinely erotic. Every soul who is "perfect and winged" (and is thus perfectly erotic, insofar as wingedness seems to correspond to eroticism, as 251b suggests) "governs the cosmos at large" (246c), whereas the soul who "has lost her feathers" (and thus is less perfectly erotic) reveals itself to have a diminished scope of concern, since it becomes limited by the body for which it cares and to which it supplies life and motivity (cf. 245c-e). The soul who has managed to receive a nourishing sight of truth proceeds to attend to her horses' needs, feasting them on nectar and ambrosia (247e); by contrast, the soul which is corrupt and no longer inclined toward erotic ascent shows a diminishment in its scope of concern to subhuman levels, allowing its horses to do as they will (rather than feasting the horses on

nectar and ambrosia, the corrupt soul allows its horses to pursue “unnatural pleasure;” 250e). In general, in the *Phaedrus*’s cosmos, what’s “higher” cares for what’s “lower,” and it does so more adequately and more comprehensively the more that it itself is in loving communion with what’s ultimate.

13. Human souls can be led by Beauty in exactly the same way as the gods are to the extent that they are rightly oriented (though, as we’ve noted, their orientation will never be as perfect and free of contingency as that of the gods). As we argued in Ch. 5, Socrates undergoes the same formative experience as does the Palinode’s divinely mad lover. While Socrates is first moved by the promise of a beautiful speech (on account of which he is willing to be led all around Attica, like a donkey chasing a carrot; 230d-e), he quickly becomes invested, instead, in Phaedrus’s own beauty which, like the Palinode’s beloved, “flashed forth” (254b) when Phaedrus read the speech (see 234d). Though Socrates tried to stopper himself against the influence of Phaedrus’s beauty in his anti-erotic speech (by blinding himself; 237a), he nevertheless comes to realize that in doing so, he has sinned against Eros. He has sinned against Eros, “the guardian of beautiful boys” (265c), by turning away from Phaedrus’s beauty rather than allow it to lead him back to Beauty. But rather than continue to think that Eros would harm Socrates by inspiring him with a lover’s madness for Phaedrus’s beauty, Socrates comes to think that divinely erotic mania is the best of all divine gifts as the divinities in the grove continue to influence him. It is with his vision restored (243b) and focused on Phaedrus’s beauty (see 244a) that Socrates is able to come to a vision of Beauty itself and then describe such an experience in a mythical hymn. Upon doing so, Socrates is driven to care more deeply for Phaedrus, no longer willing to gratify Phaedrus’s dangerous speech-lust but now praying to Eros on his behalf (257b). Beauty here has led Socrates from distortive phenomenal images (a blasphemous speech) to true images (Phaedrus’s beauty) to Beauty

itself; upon beholding Beauty itself, Socrates is led by Beauty back to relative beauties (Phaedrus and ultimately Isocrates) in care. As Beauty led Socrates from a sickly eroticism into a true eroticism, so did Beauty lead Socrates away from “pretend service” (gratification without concern for whether such gratification actually benefits the one gratified) to “genuine care.”⁶³

14. The gods, then, care for all because all things are radiant images of Beauty. In their service to Beauty, the gods seek to make those radiant images *shine*. The gods, in their care for all (246e) seek to turn all things to their best conditions so that all things not only are, but are *well*, vividly, as exemplars in their kinds. The gods seek to make things shine so that each thing is so superabundantly itself that it can’t but radiate its character for all to see. While the gods presumably cannot contribute to a given thing’s radiant self-showing in the sense of imbuing it with light (that role is reserved for Beauty), for to do so the gods would have to also be sources of light, the gods can contribute to a given thing’s radiant self-showing in the following ways: they can remove that which distorts something’s self-showing (as when Dionysus cures those plagued with ancient blood-guilts); they can exhort something to be truly itself (as when Apollo commands us to know ourselves); they can reveal truths the recognition of which will contribute to human happiness (as when Apollo provides prophetic insight and the Muses attend to the preservation of historical deeds); they can care for and arrange things so that all turns out well (Zeus’s providential care), they can themselves be radiant images of superheavenly realities (the gods, for example, each attend to their own business and thus are exemplars of justice; see 247a);⁶⁴ and, most importantly for human souls, the gods can provide a guide whom we can follow to that which we truly desire. The gods know the way to the

⁶³ If this analysis is correct, we have reason to think that the Neoplatonic understanding of the *skopos* (target) and structure of the *Phaedrus* given by Hermias (cf. Ch. 1, note 58) has some merit.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Republic* 433a.

superheavenly banquets without which we cannot be adequately nourished. By helping us see what's truly desirable the gods help us become more fully ourselves. In each of these ways, the gods help create the conditions whereby things can be fully themselves and shine all the more brightly. In the human case, it is the gift of divine mania that allows for us to be most fully ourselves and thereby shine brightly as radiant images of the superheavenly realities (see 256b). Further, insofar as divine mania can have effects irreducible to whatever is happening in the person directly inspired—the prophet can admonish, the poet can teach, the telestic purifier can heal, and the lover can reconnect one with the divine—the gods' beauty-inspired work can have lasting effects in history.

15. By descending into images, and by inspiring the gods (and even well-turned mortal souls) to care for images, Beauty has given us the means of returning to it, for its images point to it and present it to us, however inadequately. Beauty not only gives us images which can lead us back to itself, but by leading the gods down to us to care for all, Beauty has also provided us guides who know the way back to Beauty and who can lead us thereunto, and so Beauty has, in a sense, already provided us with an auxiliary that can help us to avoid our tendency to misunderstand Beauty's images. Beauty continually leads the gods up and then back down, and as Beauty descends and leads the gods down, it presents us with an opportunity to be led up, either by radiant images or by the gods' guidance. As we will see in §4, we too can cooperate in the divine descent, wherein we come to caringly serve other human beings, after following the gods up to Beauty. Indeed, Hermias goes so far as to say that Socrates himself was “*sent down* into [the realm of] generation *as a service* to the race of men and the souls of the young,”⁶⁵ and Hermias's judgment on this point is, I claim, basically right.

⁶⁵ Hermias, *Scholia*, 1.5-6. Cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 270-273.

Before we can develop this point, however, we need to further clarify how Beauty can accomplish what it accomplishes by means of images (the remainder of §3).

16. Overall, the point we are here developing is that every leading-down presents the opportunity for a leading-up (every *kata-gōgē* potentially opens up an *ana-gōgē*). Though it is not necessary that human beings will take advantage of such an opportunity—for, as we discussed in Ch. 3, human souls can only achieve “perpetual initiation” by continuing to affirm and reaffirm their commitment to truth, and nothing ensures that a given soul will do so—every descent can, in principle, open up the opportunity for our ascent.⁶⁶ That which descends to meet us where we are (whether it be Beauty itself, the gods, or well-turned human souls) in a sense “forges a path” for us to follow back to the superheavenly place. When something *descends*—as opposed to *falling*—it brings the character of that from which it descends (the true beings) down to us in a new form (i.e., in an image), and in doing so, it provides us with something accessible to us here and now which can mediate our return to the superheavenly realities. Whereas falling is characterized by a failure to take in the superheavenly realities at the acme of a particular ascent, occasioned by human vice and weakness and resulting in diminished capacities to recall the superheavenly beings all human souls have seen at some point, descent, in the sense we intend to specify, is instead a positive movement that can occur only on account of that which descends being “filled up” by the superheavenly things.

17. Descent, in this sense, is coordinate with gratuitous overflow. Something can only give away what it already has, just as something can only descend from a position it already

⁶⁶ As we noted in Ch. 5, the historical Phaedrus would seem to be a telling example of one who not only failed to affirm and reaffirm his commitments to the divine but actively spurned the gods by participating in momentous sacrileges. Nevertheless, as we argued there, Plato seems to offer in this dialogue a “literary salvation” of Phaedrus by showing us a Phaedrus who could be led by Socrates into right relation with language, love, and the divine. Socrates himself is in danger of actively distorting a fundamental truth (the nature of love) but comes to recognize his error and recommits himself to truth.

occupies. Beauty shines brightly and in doing so gives itself over to that which can receive it without diminishing in the process; in this way, it “descends” to meet us. Divine and human souls, though not themselves Beauty, can become filled up by Beauty and the other lovely forms such that they too have something to give over to those who are receptive. Beauty has led the gods up to itself *as* itself and subsequently down to itself in others. By doing so, Beauty “bridges the gap” between that which is material and phenomenal and that which is immaterial and noetic, as we will now discuss.

§3.2. Bridging the Gap

18. Images, as we said above, are always simultaneously additive and subtractive with respect to their originals. Beautiful images are, in particular, characterized by being both prismatic as they individuate and “add to” Beauty and by being iconic as they present Beauty in a way that is nonexhaustive yet referential. Because Beauty is always more than its relative images yet always presents itself in those relative images in a way that’s suitable for those who receive them, we can say that Beauty simultaneously *opens* the “gap” between our phenomenal experience (relative images of Beauty) and the noumenal realities (Beauty itself, the true beings) *and bridges it*.⁶⁷

19. In its prismatic character, Beauty is always out beyond itself, differentiating itself into the many beautiful things, none of which are Beauty itself. It *causes* those things to be beautiful, but in doing so, it also causes those things to be *other than* Beauty itself; it separates

⁶⁷ See Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, Ch. 2 for an argument to this effect developed at much greater length on the basis of the *Republic’s* account of the Good. Schindler claims that the Good beyond being is what simultaneously opens and bridges the gap between being and appearance (115). We’ll discuss the relation of Beauty and the Good in the next subsection. It is perhaps a bit more accurate to say that the Good is what’s truly responsible for opening and bridging the gap, but since the Good and the Beautiful are in a certain sense the same (as we’ll argue), the point as formulated should hold.

the reality from the appearance and the original from the image. The fact that beautiful things are *other than* Beauty itself is a consequence of Beauty's iconic character, for even iconic images, which point back to their source, fail to be adequate to their source. The relative can never measure up to the absolute. Plato clearly recognizes that there's a danger in making the distinction between reality and appearance, between form and image, for, in the *Parmenides*, he has the titular character present to Socrates a "great impasse" (133a) that attends this distinction.⁶⁸ If the distinction between being and appearance is *simply* absolute, then we will have no knowledge of, nor relation to, being: "The things among us have no power in relation to those things, nor they to us" (133e). Consequently, "None of the forms, then, is known by us" and even "what the Beautiful itself is and the Good and all the things that we do suppose to be ideas are unknown to us" (134c). Worse still, since the god partakes of Knowledge (rather than knowledge, a distinction echoed at *Phaedrus* 247d-e), the god will not "be able to know the things among us" (134d). If Beauty, then, is responsible for the gap between being and appearance that so frightens Parmenides and the young Socrates, it would seem as if, far from being that which *invites* us into communion with reality, Beauty is instead that which ensures that we are forevermore excommunicated from the holy of holies.

20. Though Parmenides has raised a fearsome challenge, it is not an irresolvable one. Nor does Parmenides's criticism "break" Platonic metaphysics. Indeed, Parmenides himself concludes his "attack" not with an admonishment for Socrates to give up on the notion of forms, but instead with an exhortation to dialectical training because Socrates is "*trying too soon*, before being trained, to define some Beautiful and Just and Good and each one of the forms"

⁶⁸ White has drawn attention to the interrelation of the *Phaedrus* and the *Parmenides* on both dramatic—e.g., Parmenides's reference to Ibycus and to chariot racing at 137a-b, "the structural pivot of the entire dialogue" (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 4)—and conceptual grounds (see 3-9); see also more recently Gordon, *Plato's Erotic World*, 102-103.

(135c; emphasis added). Indeed, Parmenides claims that if one should “deny that there are forms of the beings,” the denier will “understand nothing” and “will entirely destroy the power of dialogue” (135b-c; cf. *Phaedrus* 266b-c). Parmenides himself seems to think that there must be a way to resolve the problem and “bridge” the gap between being and appearance. While Parmenides doesn’t supply a resolution to Socrates (and why would he do so if he thinks that Socrates is not yet sufficiently trained in dialectic to be able to appreciate any resolution?), Socrates himself supplies the resolution later in life.⁶⁹ It is Beauty that *bridges* the gap.⁷⁰

21. How can Beauty bridge the gap it has opened? The key is in the two-fold character of Beauty. In its prismatic tendency, Beauty has always already dispersed itself in myriad ways, and because it has dispersed itself thus, it has the capacity to present itself in ways that are suitable to each receiver according to each receiver’s capacity. Anything that can rationally apprehend can apprehend some kind of beautiful image. Beauty has, in other words, descended to each of us in its radiant images, and it has done so in such a way that each of us can be struck by its brilliance, regardless of our current level of formation. Insofar as we are engaged in the world—insofar as we have a “world” at all—we have already met Beauty. While it is true that, in a certain sense, we can never “see” Beauty itself (since Beauty itself is *not* one of its radiant images), it’s also true that we can never *not* see Beauty itself (since Beauty itself is present in each of its radiant images).⁷¹ Our experience of the world has *always already* been structured by encounters with Beauty (though we have, for the most part, failed to recognize them as such in our average everyday way of engaging with the world, which persistently tends

⁶⁹ Part of the resolution to Parmenides’s assault requires recognizing that the terms of the assault themselves need to be disputed; see, e.g., Perl, *Thinking Being*, 25. The problem is thinking that the relationship between form and sensible image is one of being *simply* absolutely distinct. As Schindler has shown, if we recognize that what is genuinely absolute must be *inclusive* of what’s relative rather than exclusive, then we don’t fall into the Parmenidean paradoxes. Cf. *Plato’s Critique*, 114 and passim.

⁷⁰ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 476.

⁷¹ Cf. Perl, *Thinking Being*, 31.

to make idols of each of the iconic images we encounter). Beauty is *always already* at work on us (even if, perhaps, we don't realize it as such). It has already "shone" itself to us and illuminated our experience.⁷²

22. Though we aren't always struck by this luminosity, each encounter with a beautiful image has the capacity to "flash forth like a lightning bolt" (254b) and lead us back to Beauty itself. As Socrates tells us, unlike images of the other "lovely forms," such as justice, which have "no shine," Beauty itself "shone brightly" and "we grasped it shining most clearly through the clearest of our senses," for "beauty alone has this distinction to be naturally the most clearly visible and the most lovely" (250b-d). These remarks indicate that Beauty has a certain privileged role to play in our coming into understanding of reality, for Beauty is more accessible to us than the other superheavenly realities. Beauty, more than the other realities, is particularly *iconic*. Beautiful images tend, more than other images, to *refuse* to allow us to fall prey to idolatry. They "break through" our ordinary habits and ways of engaging with things and arrest us. They can do this because Beauty, unlike other forms, appeals directly to us in our sensuality, and even if we have not yet begun to "see through" them, they are still at work on us as they heal the soul's wings simply in the seeing (251b-c).⁷³ Beauty has presented itself to us in the mode in which we are most apt to receive it, for sensation is the mode of reception that tends to dominate our lives. As Gadamer puts it, "Beauty is not simply symmetry *but*

⁷² Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 477.

⁷³ Though beautiful images are more captivating than other images on account of their luster and thereby are liable to be taken as idols, there's a certain sense in which even the idolater would be unlikely to remain idolatrous if the image which he idolizes is, in fact, an image of beauty. As Socrates says, the one who continues to look at the beautiful boy, who "would sacrifice to his darling boy as if to a statue and to a god" if he "were not afraid to appear excessively mad," will be struck by a "change" as he continues to look, for he will receive "the in-flowing of beauty through the eyes," and this in-flowing will begin the process of healing his soul's wings (251a-b). The real danger, it seems, is pleasure-lust, as argued above.

*appearance itself.*⁷⁴ It “makes itself “immediately evident.”⁷⁵ By doing so, it can meet us according to our capacity and elevate us toward itself.⁷⁶ It is in this sense that we can understand Beauty as “inviting” us into intellectual relation to reality.

23. But since Beauty itself is that which inspires love in us, causing us to go out beyond ourselves toward the beautiful beloved so that we might be nourished by it and come into communion with it, and since Beauty itself shines forth into *all* things, the implication is that *all* things are lovable (even if not in the same way or in the same degree). Since all things are lovable, all things can draw us out of ourselves toward themselves, and since all things are beautiful (to some extent) all things can draw us past themselves toward Beauty. Beauty’s lovable iconicity leads us back to itself, and Beauty, as we saw in Ch. 4, prepares us to be so led. Hence, White hits the mark exactly when he says “A truly wise philosopher therefore loves everything, since everything is capable of leading the philosopher back to ‘the things that are.’”⁷⁷ Likewise, Gordon rightly notes that “the fearsome rupture between gods and humans spelled out in *Parmenides* can be, and indeed is, bridged by eros.”⁷⁸ All human beings are fundamentally erotic—it is the *core* of being human—and even those who aren’t said to be “in love” desire the beautiful (237d). This desire is *not vain*, for the beautiful has always already come down to meet us in its prismatic images and always already supplies the means of ascending back to itself in casting forth its iconic images.

⁷⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 477; emphasis added. See also Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Predicament*, 35: “beauty offers a kind of paradigm of appearance, and so perception, which is to say that it represents appearance as perfected, isolated in its purity we might say. To put it another way, beauty captures the essence of both appearance and perception (it is ‘appearance-ness’).” Likewise, see Kosman, “Beauty and the Good,” 354ff.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 476.

⁷⁶ Cf. Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 130.

⁷⁷ White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 140.

⁷⁸ Gordon, *Plato’s Erotic World*, 122. See also *Turning Toward Philosophy*, ch. 6.

§3.3. Beauty and the Good

24. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates is conspicuously silent about the *Republic's* “Good beyond being” when discussing the superheavenly things. If the Good is the source of all existence and intelligibility, as Socrates claims in the *Republic*, it is strange that Socrates does not refer to the Good when he attempts to “speak the truth” (247c) about the superheavenly things. In his discussion of these matters, we come across Justice, Moderation, Knowledge, Beauty, and the enigmatic “really real reality” (*ousia ontōs ousa*, “beingness beingly being”), but we see no reference to the Good. On account of this conspicuous silence, many commentators take the Good to be *absent* in the *Phaedrus's* metaphysical vision.⁷⁹ The silence is made all the more conspicuous insofar as Socrates does seem to briefly allude to the Good in a number of other dialogues which do not make it thematic, and so there is precedent for calling attention to its presence without discussing it directly.⁸⁰ Indeed, some commentators suggest that this absence is an indication that Plato has “changed his mind” about “the true nature of things” (247c).⁸¹ So, we must ask, does the Good have any role to play in the *Phaedrus*? And if so, what relationship does it have to Beauty?

25. While it is true that the Good is not mentioned among the superheavenly beings, it is not true that the Good is wholly absent from the *Phaedrus*, though its presence is, indeed,

⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 86, 106. Likewise Nussbaum, “‘This Story Isn’t True’: Poetry, Goodness, and Understanding in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Plato on Beauty, Wisdom, and the Arts*, ed. J. Moravcsik and P. Temko (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 122, note 2, though Nussbaum seems to have either changed her mind about this or simply omitted the comment in the revised version of the essay which is Ch. 7 of *Fragility*.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Cratylus* 417b, *Philebus* 60c (along with 20d, 22b, and 67a for some characteristics of the Good), *Lysis* 219d-221b, *Phaedo* 97e-98b, 99c, *Timaeus* 29d-e, etc.

⁸¹ Cf., e.g., T.M. Robinson, “The Relative Dating of the *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*,” *Understanding the Phaedrus: Proceedings of the II Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Livio Rosetti (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1992). Nicholson claims that the *Phaedrus* has “abandoned” the *Republic's* doctrine of the good beyond being (“Ontology of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” 19-20).

somewhat sparse. Among commentators, perhaps none more than White has tried to find an indication of the Good in the *Phaedrus*, so we'll begin with a brief review of his key claims. Two remarks in the *Phaedrus* are of particular note.

26. First, when introducing the nature of the soul's wings, Socrates claims that the wing, whose "natural capacity is to lead upward (*agein ano*) what is weighty, [...] has a share in the divine—the divine which is beautiful, wise, good, and everything of this sort" (246d-e; translation modified)—a share greater than that of all of the other bodily parts. Concerning this remark, White argues that since "Beauty is designated as a Form at 250b," this passage, which places goodness as "metaphysically parallel to beauty and wisdom," can be seen as introducing "the form of the good."⁸² In other words, though Socrates doesn't mention seeing Goodness out beyond the heavens, it can be inferred that it is there to be seen since it has the same kind of character as Beauty (as well as wisdom), which is one of the things seen in the superheavenly place. While there is, perhaps, a danger in formulating the point in this way (for the Good, whatever it is, is not a form like the other forms, for otherwise it couldn't be the cause of their existence, as the *Republic* claims), the point is persuasive: when we hear about Good alongside Beauty, we should understand that the Good has the same basic metaphysical character as Beauty, whatever that metaphysical character is.⁸³

27. Second, when introducing the nature of soul via the chariot image, Socrates claims that "All of the gods' horses and charioteers are themselves good and from good stock (*te agathoi kai ex agathōn*), but the situation of other horses and charioteers is mixed." He goes on

⁸² White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 158, note 11.

⁸³ Cf. Perl, *Thinking Being*, 60: "The good is not merely one being, one form, among the others, but the very luminosity in virtue of which any being, any form, is there to be seen at all. [...] the good is not the reality of anything, but the enabling condition for the reality of all things." See also note 70 to Ch. 3. It may be more precise to say that the form of the Good and Beauty have the same metaphysical character, which is distinct from and derivative from the Good beyond being.

to explain how in human beings, “one of these horses is noble and good and from like stock (*kalos te kai agathos kai ek tohoutōn*), but the other is the opposite and from opposite stock (*ex enantiōn te kai enantios*)” (246a-b).⁸⁴ Scully’s translation rightly gives the contextually appropriate reading of *agathōn*, *tohoutōn*, and *enantiōn* as words being used to discuss the various charioteers’ and horses’ lineages. These genitives are functioning substantively rather than adjectivally (as “good” is when we say “good stock”), and the only ways to render a substantive in English are either to supply a noun for the substantive adjective to be modifying (as Scully does) or to hypostasize the adjective into an entity (as when we speak of *The Good* as distinct from some good *thing*). White suggests that we render these genitives in the second way just mentioned:

“if a literal sense is preserved, then the point is both that all aspects of divine soul are inherently good and that these aspects are also ‘from the good’ in the sense that the good is not exhausted by those features of it animating divine soul. This reading suggests a kind of participation relation between divine soul and the good, a relation which established the good as not only real in itself, but occupying an especially high place in the metaphysical hierarchy, given that divine soul depends on it for its own reality.”⁸⁵

Accordingly, White claims to find here a second subtle indication that *The Good* is not, in fact, absent from the *Phaedrus*, for the gods are not just wholly good but are wholly “from the Good.” While this an attractive suggestion, it should be noted that the plural forms used in 246a-b would more properly be translated literally as “good and from good *things*,” not “good and from the good,” and so there is a linguistic difficulty with White’s interpretation that would need to be addressed in order to maintain the strength of his claim. Nevertheless, the point at hand can be salvaged insofar as we’ve already claimed that the gods, being dependent beings, must have derived their particular characters from something adequate to bestow them upon them, and since their characters are wholly good, they must come from a wholly good source of goodness. The most natural way to account for the goodness of the

⁸⁴ Cf. 249e and 274a where Socrates uses *agathos kai agathōn* and *aristos kai aristōn* phrasing.

⁸⁵ White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 94; cf. 132-133.

gods utilizing Platonic language would be to recognize that they are what they are on account of their “proximity” to the Good (cf. 249c).⁸⁶

28. While White’s points are somewhat speculative, we can add some force to his contention by going on to consider the relationship between Beauty and the Good and by considering the “functions” these principles play. The *Symposium* seems to suggest an identity between the Good and the Beautiful (201c; cf. *Meno* 77b). On the other hand, the Good and the Beautiful seem to have different characterizations, and the *Philebus* even speaks of the “power of the good taking refuge for us in the nature of beauty (*katapepheugen hēmin hē tou agathou dunamis eis tēn tou kalon phusin*)” (64e). Commentators have frequently argued that a strict identity between the Good and the Beautiful is untenable, though they don’t always agree about how to draw the distinction.⁸⁷ Kosman has perhaps made the clearest statement of the relationship:

“Understood properly, the relationship of the beauty represented by the *kalon* to the good thus reveals the relationship of appearance to being. A thing’s being *kalon* is not a cosmetic supplement, a surface that is painted on; *it is the shining forth of the thing’s nature*. The *kalon* is, then, not something in addition to the good, and so to speak on its surface. It is the mode of the good that shows forth; it is the splendor of the appearance of the good. The *kalon*, we might say, is the splendid virtue of appearance.”⁸⁸

The confusion about the relationship of the Good and the Beautiful is warranted because the Beautiful is the Good *in its appearing*. Beauty has a privileged position in the *Phaedrus*’s account of the superheavenly things because it is that through which Goodness meets the eye.

29. The close-knit relationship between Beauty and the Good shows itself in the way in which Beauty and the Good have a correlated twofoldness. We discussed the way in which

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 137.

⁸⁷ Cf. Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 49, Gerasimos Santas, “Plato on Love, Beauty, and the Good,” *The Greeks and the Good Life: Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Philosophy Symposium*, ed. David Depew (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1979), 59, and, more broadly, Rachel Barney, “Notes on Plato on the *Kalon* and the Good,” *Classical Philology*, Vol. 105 (2010). See also *Philebus* 65a.

⁸⁸ Kosman, “Beauty and the Good,” 355. Cf. Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” 260, as well as the remarks from Schindler and Gadamer cited above. See also Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.7.

Beauty's two dimensions (the prismatic and iconic characters) are reflected in two fundamental features of the image (the additive and falling-short characters), as well as in the twofoldness of love (resource and poverty), which characterizes the core of human nature. We can now add that whereas Beauty is *iconic* (in that its self-presentations point back to itself so that we are anagogically drawn by it), so is the Good *desirable* (in that it pulls all things toward itself by being the "for the sake of which" of all things; cf. *Republic* 505e), and whereas Beauty is *prismatic* (in that its self-presentations are differentiated and individuated in their descent into the images), so is the Good *generous* (in that it gives all things their characters in its non-envious "overflow;" cf. *Republic* 508b). In the Good and the Beautiful, we see two different ways of understanding and relating to the way in which reality itself is structured fundamentally by descent (*katabasis*) and ascent (*anabasis*), departure (*exitus/proodos*) and return (*reditus/epistrophē*). The "really real" source of reality gives itself over to all things (that's how they come to be in the first place) and calls all things back to itself ("beauty bids," *ho kalos kallei*). In their transcendence of images and effects, the Good and the Beautiful remain "absolute" (*auto kath' hauto*) undiminished by and irreducible to what "emanates" from them. But in their immanence to their images and effects, the Good and the Beautiful become "relative," apprehensible by us in our eachness in each apprehensible thing.⁸⁹ In being simultaneously absolute and relative, transcendent and immanent, both "bridge the gap" between being and appearance, and thus both are able to (and do!) descend to us and proffer to us a way to return to them so that we might commune with them.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 130.

⁹⁰ What of "really real reality," *ousia ontōs ousa*, "beingness beingly being?" It would seem like any identification (regardless of whether we recognize the distinction drawn between the Good's "in-itselfness" and Beauty's phenomenality) between the *Republic's* Good beyond being (*epekeina tēs ousias*) and the *Phaedrus's* Beauty, which is something seen when looking out at "beingness beingly being," would necessarily stumble on account of the fact that one of the terms is "beyond" being while the other is situated among the "true beings." Is Beauty a "true being" and thus something which the Good is

§4. Writing and Cooperative Descent

§4.1. Transition: Writing as a Locus of Cooperative Descent

1. In the preceding sections, we've sought to show that the *Phaedrus's* philosophical vision is one in which communion with reality is, in fact, possible precisely because reality itself descends to us and elevates us beyond our tendency to be arrested by images so as to be adequate to the reception of reality on reality's own terms. This, we've argued, is what Beauty does. Beauty draws us into communion with itself, and the experience of being courted by Beauty transforms us so that we start to relate to reality differently. Beauty itself initiates the divine dance and calls us "onto the floor" by descending to us in a way suitable to our own unformed mode of reception (first movement); it then leads us beyond ourselves and our deficiencies back to the superheavenly things which are, in a sense, our true home, from which we've been alienated (second movement). But now, having come back to the superheavenly things in memory by seeing through their earthly images, we are given the opportunity to take on a new, responsible and authentic relation to the realities thus remembered and their earthly images. It is, of course, not necessary that we will do so, especially given the contingency and fragility of our orientation to the superheavenly things. But if we have been well-formed by the first two movements of the divine dance, we will, in fact, *want* to complete the movement in a suitable way. The suitable completion is to care *as* the gods care, to do as the gods do, to contribute in service to their providential order, and to adopt for ourselves the gods'

"beyond," or is it improper to identify "true being" (*to ontōs on*) with the "being" (*ousia*) that the Good is said to be beyond? This is a thorny problem, the resolution of which is well-beyond the scope of this project insofar as it would require a more exhaustive comparison of the respective metaphysics operative in both the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. Given the paucity of discussion of just what "really real reality" is in the *Phaedrus*, such a comparison would probably remain somewhat speculative. White's suggestion that both the Good and really real reality are alike described as "holding together" all of what is (247c-d; *Phaedo* 99c) would perhaps be a good place to start; see *Rhetoric and Reality*, 110.

orientation toward reality to the extent humanly possible (253a; cf. *Theaetetus* 176b).⁹¹ Reality itself descends out of care to all, and so the well-ordered human soul will likewise *positively* descend to contribute to reality's self-manifesting mission out of love for reality. The cooperative descent, then, is the third movement of the divine dance.

2. In order to clarify this point, we will focus on the *Phaedrus*'s paradoxical critique of writing. There is a rich and diverse body of literature on this part of the *Phaedrus* that we cannot treat exhaustively within the confines of this project; accordingly, we'll focus our discussion of the critique on seeing how it affords us insight into the character of the third movement in the divine dance. Writing, we claim, when properly understood, is a privileged way by which we partake of and cooperate with reality's caring self-manifestation. Writing is a way of *extending* and presenting reality's self-manifestation for others across space and time. Because writing has the basic character of an image (*eidōlon*, 276a), it can serve as an icon which presents the reader with the opportunity to be drawn beyond the written composition to the reality about which it discourses. In writing about something well and beautifully, we contribute to the divine task of making all things *shine*. Writing, however, is *essentially* unable to exhaustively capture the truth about the superheavenly things, and to the extent that a writer or reader mistakenly thinks that it can do so, the written image transforms from icon into idol. Though there is a genuine danger of having an idolatrous conception of writing, as the critique shows, writing nevertheless has the capacity to remind (*hupomnēsai*, 275d; *hupomnēmata*, 276d) us of those realities. When writing is treated as an iconic image and a reminder, it is able to mediate

⁹¹ Cf. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 174 and Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 162 and note 52, 171. See also White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 150.

our return to the realities about which the written composition discourses, something Platonic writing does particularly well.⁹²

§4.2. Socrates's Critique of Writing: Paradox, Irony, and Motives

3. As we saw in Ch. 1, the *Phaedrus* is a paradoxical text, for it simultaneously demands organic unity in every composition (264c) and, at least apparently, refuses to embody that organic unity in its structure; as we near the end of the dialogue, this paradox is compounded by a second structural paradox: the *Phaedrus* appears to be “*indicting* writing in writing.”⁹³ We are immediately confronted with a tension between what the dialogue says and what it enacts, between its *logos* and its *ergon*.⁹⁴ After discussing the conditions under which speech becomes artful and beautiful, Socrates recounts a myth about the invention or discovery (*heurein*, 274c) of writing, in which two divinities, Theuth and Thamus, discuss the merits of a number of the arts that Theuth, “the greatest of technicians (*technikōtate*)” (274e), has brought to light. Thamus (Ammon; an Egyptian equivalent of Zeus) asks Theuth (an Egyptian equivalent of Hermes) to explain “what benefit there might be in each art.” Thamus then censures some of the arts and praises others, “depending upon whether Theuth seemed to speak beautifully (*kalōs*)” (274d-e). Theuth claims that the discovery of letters “will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory. The drug (*pharmakon*) for memory (*mnēmēs*) and wisdom has

⁹² As Gordon argues, the dialogues are “paradigms of image-making as an avenue for philosophical insight” (*Turning Toward Philosophy*, 137).

⁹³ Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 158. Questions inspired by the structural paradox of critiquing writing in writing are not novel to modern Platonic hermeneutics. The anonymous, for example, Neoplatonic *Prolegomena* addresses the “much discussed question why [Plato] thought it necessary to commit his teachings to writings” (III.13.3-4).

⁹⁴ Cf. Desjardins, “Why Dialogues?” 110. In *Question of Beauty*, Hyland notes a number of ways in which the *logos* of the critique of writing is in tension with the *ergon* displayed in the dialogue’s prologue (67). Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 222, cautions us against exaggerating this difficulty in order to make metatextual arguments, such as Derrida’s, which argues that such a “contradiction is not contingent” (“Plato’s Pharmacy,” 158). Likewise, see Lucas Swaine, “A Paradox Reconsidered: Written Lessons from Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (1998), 250. Swaine suggests that the critique is not, in fact, paradoxical (259), for its issues are easily avoidable.

been discovered (*bēurethē!*)” (274e). Thamus, by contrast, claims that Theuth has allowed his fatherly fondness of letters to mislead him, for what Theuth has said of letters is “the opposite of their real effect” (275a). Instead, letters “will produce a forgetting (*lēthēn*) in the souls” of those who learn them “as they fail to exercise their memory,” for those dependent on writing will cease to recollect (*anamimnēiskomenous*) their insights “from within by themselves” but instead will rely on external “foreign signs” (275a), effectively outsourcing their memory to a written medium. Thamus concludes his criticism by saying that Theuth has not “discovered a drug (*pharmakon*) for memory (*mnēmēs*), but for reminding (*hupomnēseōs*).” Theuth offers his students “an apparent (*doxan*), not a true (*alētheian*) wisdom.” Because Theuth’s students will have “heard much [...] without real teaching,” they will only have the appearance of being “rich in knowledge” (275a-b); consequently, with an overinflated conception of their wisdom, “they will be difficult to be with (*chalepoi suneinai*)” (275b). Socrates and Phaedrus both appear to accept “Ammon’s prophecy” (275c; cf. d), and Socrates goes on to clarify and add to Thamus’s critique (as we’ll go on to discuss). Accordingly, Socrates and Thamus appear to be criticizing the very medium by which they are able to speak their criticisms in the first place, thereby producing a paradoxical text.

4. Socrates and Thamus attack writing along a couple of different lines of argument. As we’ve already seen, Thamus has claimed that letters will cause people to be forgetful rather than improve their memory. By inscribing one’s insight into a corporeal medium and relying on that inscription as a substitute for active memory, one will no longer need to keep the insight firmly in mind; as a result of not being kept firmly in mind, the insight will become less readily accessible in the future and eventually forgotten—unless, that is, one so happens to look at the inscription and is reminded of what one has once known. Written speeches, as Socrates reiterates, are nothing more than “reminders (*hupomnēsai*) for a person already in the

know about the things jotted down” (275d).⁹⁵ Socrates compounds this criticism by saying that it will be “simple-minded” to think that “something clear and secure” is to be found in something in written form (275c). Despite the fact that writing appeals in part because it allows us to inscribe our fleeting thoughts on a material with significant longevity, any such material can be (and will eventually be) destroyed, and so writing can only offer the appearance of permanence, not a guarantee of permanence. The fact that a written work is in principle copyable an indefinite number of times only strengthens the illusion of permanence rather than guaranteeing it.

5. It is striking that Socrates says that there is nothing “clear” in writing, especially insofar as the distinction between clear and unclear writing (i.e., writing that brings the reader to a firm recognition of the thing under discussion) is readily available to us from our everyday experience. But if writing can’t *teach* new knowledge to the reader (275b) but can only remind a reader of what she already knows (275d), as Socrates claims, Socrates’s remark about the lack of clarity to be found in writing is sensible, especially when seen in light of the interlocutors’ prior discussion of rhetorical manuals. While criticizing writing, Socrates says, more specifically, that someone couldn’t leave behind an art (*technē*) in written form (275c). While one could leave behind an instruction manual that outlines the kinds of practices concerning which one must be competent if one is to be an artisan, it’s impossible to inscribe the entirety of an art within such a technical manual, for all that is proper to art is irreducible to the techniques which Socrates calls not art but the “prerequisites” of art (see 268a-269c). While

⁹⁵ We might note further that living memory is also liable to be seen as inferior to the written inscription thereof, since living memory is subject to change and to all sorts of tricks of memory (e.g., biases that distort our recollection of things). As Lebeck notes, this point is dramatized in the prologue, for Socrates immediately opts for “Lysias himself,” as opposed to Phaedrus’s memory of Lysias’s speech (something, we recall, Phaedrus spent all morning trying to perfect): “Then Phaedrus is out of luck (228B-E2). The prediction of Thamus holds good: the written copy has not so much aided the exercise of memory as prevented it” (“Central Myth,” 286).

one must know the prerequisite techniques of an art in order to practice the art artfully, and not just by happenstance experience (*emperiai*; 270b), knowledge of such techniques is not sufficient because one 1. must also know when to utilize them, for how long, and in what circumstances (268b), 2. must recognize the “opportune moment” (*kairos*, 272a) in which a given technique ought to be used, and 3. must deploy the techniques with a knowledge of the nature of that to which the techniques are applied (see 270a-c).⁹⁶ While a technique is codifiable, and thereby inscribable, the form of knowledge which we call art (*technē*) resists codification and inscription since art requires, minimally, knowledge of the object of art and practical judgment about when and how to apply the art.⁹⁷ Genuine knowledge, for Plato, requires a kind of contact with, and togetherness with (see, e.g., *sunienai* at 249b), the object of knowledge, and the practical judgment required for discerning when and how to use techniques artfully requires a similar acquaintanceship with the particular being upon which art will work. An author can give a reader neither the noetic experience of communion with reality nor acquaintanceship with *these* particular beings via the written composition itself because communion and acquaintanceship must be experienced, at the end of the day, first-hand. One learns an art, to some extent, by practicing the art on particular beings in particular circumstances under the guidance of one who knows what to do, but one hasn’t mastered the

⁹⁶ Socrates clarifies these points in reference to a putative rhetorical art by comparison to the doctor’s art and the tragic poet’s art. In each case, there are a number of techniques by which the artisan can affect the body (in the doctor’s case; e.g., inducing vomiting) or the soul (in the poet’s and rhetorician’s cases; e.g., evoking an emotional reaction like fear, anger, sadness, or pity). Artful use of such techniques is not simply the capacity to deploy these techniques at will to accomplish the intended effect but also requires knowing when and how to use them in order to benefit the object of concern. See 268a-271b.

⁹⁷ On this, see Rabbås, “Writing, Memory, and Wisdom, 33-34 and McCoy, *Plato on Rhetoric*, 173. Rabbås notes that Socrates shifts focus from writing considered as a composition to writing considered as a technology at the beginning of the critique (30-31). McCoy stresses the relevance of practical judgment (*phronēsis*), the capacity to recognize and take advantage of the opportune moment (*kairos*), and love in Socrates’s rhetorical practice (see 14-15, 167 and Ch. 7). See also Schindler, “Language as *Technē*,” for a detailed discussion of the distinction between technique and art (*technē*) as applied to language. Griswold, by contrast, offers an opposing view of art as neither truly distinct from technique nor as necessarily truth-oriented; see *Self-Knowledge*, 160, 177-178.

art until one understands for oneself what the object of concern is (i.e., has it written into one's soul) and why one must treat it one way rather than another in order to bring it to completion. In this sense, we could say that there's nothing "clear" in writing because writing can't, by itself, manifest what needs to be manifested for the reader to develop an art. Writing itself can't accomplish the "leading-together" (i.e., collection, *sunagōgē*; 265d, 266b) of many things into one form by which a speech can have clarity (265d), even if it can represent the author's having done so. If it's the case that, for Plato, all forms of genuine knowledge require a kind of "contact" with and "togetherness" with the thing to be known, then there's good reason to think that writing can't communicate knowledge and thus is reasonably said to have nothing "clear" in it.⁹⁸

6. Socrates continues the assault by analogizing writing to painting. Writing resembles painting (*graphē ... homoion zōgraphiai*) because in both cases, the corporeal inscription gives the illusion of something living (*zōon*), such that one might expect the corporeal inscription to act like the living thing it resembles (in the case of painting, some animal that should be moving about; in the case of writing, living speech; 275d). When you question "a painting's creations [...], they remain in complete and solemn silence," and when you ask a written composition a question, "the words signify only one thing, and always the same thing" (275d-e; cf. *Protagoras* 329a).⁹⁹ This comparison is particularly apt when it comes to written *dialogue*, for in dialogue we don't just have written text but imitations of living beings doing the kinds of things living beings do (walking, conversing, having affective reactions to one's environment and to the

⁹⁸ For knowledge as a form of togetherness (*sunousia*) in Plato generally, see Perl, *Thinking Being*, 46-54. The *Seventh Letter*, the digression of which is thematically and substantively similar to the *Phaedrus's* critique of writing, makes a similar point; cf. 341c-d. While there is not sufficient space to discuss the *Seventh Letter* nor its authenticity, it is worth noting the parallel. See Desjardins, "Why Dialogues?" 111.

⁹⁹ The same points would hold for statues and the epigrams inscribed upon them and other monuments, such as the one inscribed on Midas's tomb (264c-d).

conversation, etc.); within the genre of dialogue, every writing *is* a kind of life-painting.¹⁰⁰ The conversation between Phaedrus and Socrates doesn't change, no matter how many times we look back at it, and if we are confused about why one of them said something or why the other accepted or rejected it, we can't solicit a response from them. Instead, the interlocutors say always only one and the same thing. As author, Plato compounds the issue by having these written imitations of living people discuss a written text (Lysias's speech) and repeatedly look at its introduction to inquire of it whether it conforms to the norms of good speechmaking. As Phaedrus reads and rereads the opening of the speech, it only ever says the same thing (see 262e-264e). Socrates, it seems, wants to ask Lysias how he is defining "love," given that "love" belongs to the ambiguous class of words (263c), but since Lysias did not define "love" in his speech, no matter how many times we look, we will never find an explicit definition there.

7. Because writing is like painting, in that it presents inanimate likenesses of animate discourse, two other difficulties follow. First, just as writing is unable to respond to our questions or change what it says when we address it, so also writing is unable to ensure that it is addressed to a suitable audience (275d-e). And since it is unable to modify what it says, it cannot re-articulate its message in terms that are suitable for the audience it just so happens to have. Socrates's criticism is again clarified when set in light of prior remarks. When determining the requirements for speaking artfully and beautifully, Socrates claims that the truly artful rhetorician, who has the capacity to lead souls with words (261a), must know not

¹⁰⁰ Gadamer develops this theme at length in his "Plato as Portraitist." Recall also the anonymous Neoplatonist commentator's claim that every dialogue is a cosmos, and every cosmos a dialogue (cf. Ch. 1, §1). By not just giving us arguments and claims, but instead dramatizing them, Plato not only tells us what's true but presents us with an image of coming to the truth in dialogue. The dialogue is an image of animate speech, not simply an inscription of animate speech. It images both the process of thinking and the results rather than just the results, and it can do so more effectively because it provides a whole-soul account of how speeches affect us (i.e., it doesn't just appeal to our rationality but also to our affective motive forces). On the relevance of drama to the dialogue's *argument*, see especially Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, ch. 1, Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, ch. 1, and Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*.

only the nature of the object of her art (as we noted above) and the nature of speeches but also which speech-types will affect which soul-types in the desired way (271b, 271e-272a). Even if an excellent writer knew both her subject matter and her intended audience, and even if she crafted her written speech accordingly so as to fruitfully direct her audience toward recognition of the subject matter, there's no guarantee that her actual reader will be affected in the same way as the intended audience might. The actual audience might not only fail to understand the author's message but may have a soul-type that is prone to actively misinterpreting the author's message (if, for example, one wrote a letter to a cowardly friend encouraging her to act more bravely, a reader disposed toward rashness might falsely take otherwise good advice as a confirmation of the "goodness" of rash action). And because the author is likely not to be present when a reader reads (a possibility exacerbated by the aforementioned indefinite copyability of written compositions), the author will likely not be present to clarify the point at hand. This leads to the second issue at hand: a written composition cannot defend itself (since it can't ever modify what it says) and consequently requires a living "parent" (the author) to come to its aid whenever it is misinterpreted (275e). Plato exemplifies this difficulty by keeping Lysias off-stage, unable to dispute Socrates's criticisms of his speech. More broadly, this point is, again, particularly apt for Plato's own writings; as Schleiermacher has said, "of all philosophers who have ever lived, none have had so good a right as Plato, in many respects, to set up the only too general complaint of being misunderstood, or even not understood at all."¹⁰¹ Plato, like any writer, can neither clarify, modify, nor defend his writings and thus must rely in large part on the reader's good graces and philosophical orientation if he is to accomplish his goals in writing, whatever they may be. In most cases, an author will not be able to defend her work. What's more, the author generally

¹⁰¹ Schleiermacher, *Introductions*, 4.

is not in a place to *learn* from her reader's disputation; though Socrates himself does not make this point, it is, I think, something he would recognize, given his frequent comments about entering into discussion for the sake of being refuted and thereby learning (cf. *Gorgias* 458a).

8. On the basis of the preceding remarks, we have good reason to accept Thamus's claim that writing cannot offer "true wisdom," but only "apparent wisdom" (275a-b). Writing cannot, it seems, supply a reader with knowledge, nor can writing correct the reader's mistakes, and so a piece of writing has no way to prevent a reader from coming to the false conclusion of being in a condition of complete understanding. Given that the "understanding" the reader will have achieved by reading and retaining copies of a number of writings need not, in fact, have its basis in the text, let alone reality, there's nothing to prevent the reader from becoming "puffed up" with a false estimation of his own wisdom.¹⁰² Consequently, as Thamus says, the collector of writings will be "hard to be with" on account of his hubris. Speech-writers themselves who gain fame and followings will likewise be puffed up with false estimations of their own wisdom insofar as they will think that they are rivaling the gods in their capacity to lay down laws, customs, or indisputable truths for future generations who read their writings (recall that when the question of the value of speech-writing is first introduced, Socrates counters Phaedrus's worry that people will scoff at Lysias for being a speech-writer by saying that the various law-giving speech-writers are all too fond of their own abilities, claiming, hubristically, to be equal to the gods, *isotheon*; 258b-c; cf. *Sophist* 233c). As speech-writer and auditor, Lysias and Phaedrus both seem to come into the dialogue with this kind of hubris, for Lysias seems to think he has cleverly circumvented the norms of pederasty to get whatever favors he desires, and Phaedrus thinks Lysias is so clever that he can't but refer back to his

¹⁰² Rabbås notes that insofar as the written word persuades us that we have wisdom we don't actually have, it is a form of pandering ("Writing, Wisdom, and Memory," 36).

premiere speech-writing time and time again. Phaedrus thinks he has gotten something formidable from Lysias that will allow him to “capture” others, and he enters into his conversation with Socrates in order to test out this capacity (cf. Ch. 5).

9. To quote Nestor, following Socrates, “the word cannot be cast aside” (260a).¹⁰³ We have to take these criticisms seriously, for they have serious merit, and any attempt to “save” writing from the critique must recognize and account for that merit. Writing, like images and other “pharmacological” features of the dialogue, poses a genuine danger. Just as images can arrest our gaze, giving us occasion to mislead ourselves about the true nature of things, so can writing arrest us, giving us occasion to mislead ourselves into thinking that we have knowledge and mastery when really we’ve seen nothing of truth. But if these criticisms of writing are valid, how are we to understand the fact that Plato presented them *specifically in writing*? The fact that Plato seems to be denying in his action what his words affirm could be taken to indicate that these criticisms themselves offer only “the appearance (*doxan*) of wisdom, not true wisdom” (275a), and so we must ask whether this is true. Further, we must ask how these criticisms of writing contribute to a resolution to the thematic question of the dialogue’s latter third: “how is one able to speak (*legein*) and write (*graphein*) beautifully (*kalōs*), and how not” (259e; cf. 258c)?

10. Attempts to resolve this paradox about the written critique of writing vary dramatically. Hackforth, for example, claims that “it will be obvious to anyone who reads these pages with perception that Plato is concerned to state and defend his own position in the matter of authorship.”¹⁰⁴ If so, we might ask whether Plato’s dialogues are simply reminders for himself in old age (276c), unable to teach others anything new or spur them into philosophical reflection. However, the supposition that Plato simply stated his own position

¹⁰³ *Iliad* 2.361.

¹⁰⁴ Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 162.

on writing through the criticisms of Socrates and Thamus, coupled with the *prima facie* strangeness of that position, has led scholars to assign the *Phaedrus* alternatively to the earliest, most immature phase of Plato's career (Schleiermacher)¹⁰⁵ and to the "senile impotence" of old age (Raeder).¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, many scholars are less inclined to interpret the critique of writing either as unequivocally critical or as unequivocally Plato's considered view.¹⁰⁷ "Only a blind or grossly insensitive reading," according to Derrida's rebuke, "could indeed have spread the rumor that Plato was *simply* condemning the writer's activity."¹⁰⁸ Alongside Derrida, less hermeneutically suspicious commentators also dismiss the suggestion that Plato *simply* intends to critique writing, on the grounds that such a suggestion ignores the apparent ironies and other hermeneutically "opaque" literary features within the dialogue, which resist interpretations that stick to the text's surface.¹⁰⁹

11. How are such ironies and other hermeneutically opaque features relevant to an adequate and fruitful interpretation of the critique of writing? To what extent do they blunt or transform the critique's apparent force and scope? Can we treat ironies as indicators of some distance between what the text holds in its depths and its surface meaning? If so, are the surface and depth levels opposed, or is it possible that attending to ironies and other hermeneutically opaque features will lead us into a *deeper* understanding of the text and its

¹⁰⁵ This view has a longstanding, ancient pedigree. Cf. *Prolegomena*, X.24.5-10 and Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, III.38.

¹⁰⁶ See Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," 66-67.

¹⁰⁷ Ferrari, for example, takes Socrates's remarks about writing to be "less clearly an indictment than a warning of potential danger; he stamps its packing-case not 'radioactive' but 'volatile'—to be handled with care" (*Listening to the Cicadas*, 204). Altman, by contrast, takes the critique of writing to be emphatically *not* Plato's own view; instead, it is an example of what Altman calls Plato's "basanistic pedagogy" (*The Guardians in Action*, 172).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 67. In Derrida's account, the critique of writing, its ironies and internal ambiguities, and its structural tensions, are symptomatic of Plato's metaphysical commitments, which come to him, largely passively, from the conceptual schemes of his language and their "logic of supplementation." See 71-72, 76, 85-86, 95, 158-159.

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g., Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 206ff.

subject matter that is *not* at odds with the surface meaning? In other words, is the distance between the surface-level meaning and the depth-level meaning an expression of differing degrees of *adequacy* in the understanding of what is said? And could the surface-level indeed prove to be a positive *entry* into a deeper, more adequate understanding, which recontextualizes the surface-level meaning within a greater whole?¹¹⁰

12. To address these questions, we must ask what motivates the critique of writing. By a “motivation” for the critique of writing, I mean a well-considered reason accepted as true (whether explicitly or as part of one’s background understanding relative to the matter at hand) according to which the practice of writing poses a serious problem, to which one must attend carefully. By determining the motivation of the critique we can better evaluate the critique’s force and scope, as well as whether the text’s surface hides a deeper meaning. We here leave out of consideration *ad hominem* explanations, which, in one way or another, assert that the critique follows from some feature of the author’s identity—that is from some *pathos* or unconscious source—rather than from an antecedent truth claim, for such accounts are unhelpful for the goal of interpreting the Platonic text as ultimately making a truth claim with which we must intellectually grapple. We also leave out of account explanations which suggest that Plato manages to avoid the dangers of writing simply by adopting the right kind of literary form (i.e., dialogue is immune to the criticisms in a way that other literary forms, like treatises, are not). Though it is surely the case that the dialogical form *does* resist the calcification decried in the critique better than other literary styles, it does not utterly pacify those dangers *simply insofar as* it’s a different form of writing.¹¹¹ Our prior comments on how Plato’s own writings are subject to the critique are evidence for this point.

¹¹⁰ Recall our discussion of literary irony in Ch. 3, §2.1.

¹¹¹ See Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 29-30, 214.

13. If neither *ad hominem* nor purely formal, literary accounts suffice to account for the critique of writing and its paradoxical relation to the dialogue as a written text, what could suffice? Three basic motivations tend to be proposed: political prudence, pedagogical prudence, and philosophical necessity.¹¹² By “prudential motivations,” I mean well-considered reasons, accepted as true, according to which the practice of writing poses a serious practical problem, perhaps even a danger. A politically prudential motivation for the critique of writing would be, for example, one in which Plato thought writing is dangerous because inscribing what he took to be true would upset the *polis* and put him in danger, whereas a pedagogically prudential motivation for the critique would be, for example, one in which Plato thought writing is dangerous because inscribing what he took to be true would give a student premature access to something for which she is not yet suited, resulting in her detriment. While either of these motivations could partially blunt the scope and force of the critique and, in doing so, could suggest that an adequate interpretation of the critique of writing must move past the surface denunciation to a deeper consideration, prudential motivations, nevertheless, are, I claim, insufficient to exhaustively account for such features and for the content of the critique.¹¹³ What counts as the prudentially correct choice about how and when to express oneself depends on the nature of what is being expressed and of how expression works (a philosophical, rather than merely prudential, matter, as we will soon discuss). Socrates has

¹¹² Cf. Griswold, “Plato’s Metaphilosophy,” 143.

¹¹³ A longer treatment of the topic would explore political and pedagogical prudential motivations in more depth, but doing so is beyond the scope of our current project. In addition to the Straussian literature (discussed briefly in Ch. 3), the *Second Letter’s* command to burn the letter after committing it to memory (II.314c), as well as Numenius’s account of Plato’s characterization of Euthyphro (see fr. 23, reproduced as text 2.1 in Boys-Stones’s *Platonist Philosophy*), are good examples of texts that suggest politically prudential motivations. In addition to Altman’s aforementioned “basanistic pedagogy,” the ancient Platonists’ predilection for “reading orders” (see, e.g., Albinus’s *Introduction to Plato’s Dialogues*, Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives* III.49-51, and the so-called “Iamblichean curriculum) are suggestive of pedagogically prudential motivations.

already argued that it is necessary “for those who intend to speak well (*eu*) and beautifully (*kalōs*) to have before all else a discursive understanding (*dianoian eiduian*) of the truth (*to alēthes*) about the subject he means to discuss” (259e; cf. 270a-272b). Knowledge of the *truth* is a necessary condition for speaking well, which would be the practical goal of a prudentially-oriented discourse. Though what would count as “speaking well” would be determined by the specific mode of prudence involved, the general point stands: speaking well, and thereby prudential discourse, presupposes an account of the true. Since a determination of what counts as prudential in writing presupposes an account of what’s true about the *nature* of expression, we will turn instead to possible philosophical motivations for the critique of writing.

14. By a “philosophical motivation,” I mean well-considered reasons, accepted as true, according to which the practice of writing poses a theoretical problem. That is, the problem of writing is irreducible to questions of “which is the best way to proceed” but instead runs up against a fundamental limitation written into the very nature of reality. Writing *can’t* do the thing we want it to do because reality isn’t structured in such a way as to allow for writing to accomplish the task we want to give it. If we want writing to be the “drug for memory and wisdom,” by which we’d be able to outsource our most fundamental insights into the nature of reality in a written, indefinitely copyable medium, communicable to any potential reader such that she too would have access to the author’s understanding, then we will inevitably be dissatisfied, for reality itself, and our understanding of reality, are not the kinds of things that are exhaustively *expressible* in writing. If this is true (as we’ll go on to argue), then we have good reasons for thinking that prudential motivations cannot exhaust the critique, since any estimation of what’s prudential must first reckon with the nature of reality.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ In addition to Griswold, some others who think that the critique is motivated by philosophical speculation on the nature of language and our capacity to express the nature of the ultimate structures of

15. In order to clarify what is at stake in a philosophical motivation for the critique of writing, I will articulate what I take to be the *Phaedrus's* underlying understanding of language's capacity to adequately express being and the nature of reality (§4.3). After doing so, we will be in a position to interpret the critique of writing more deeply using the distinction between the iconic image and the idolatrous image developed in §2. Using this distinction, we will see that the concept of the idol allows us to preserve the surface meaning of the Platonic text, even as the concept of the icon allows us to enter more deeply into the critique (§4.4). The critique, I shall argue, transforms when contextualized by the *Phaedrus's* metaphysical vision (as discussed in §2-3). Though writing is justly criticized when taken as an idol, the critique becomes, as I argue, a *celebration* of writing when writing retains its aboriginal "iconicity." It is a celebration particularly of our capacity to cooperate, in writing, with reality's self-manifestation.

§4.3. Can Language Express Being?

16. There are a number of basic understandings of the nature of expressibility available with respect to the following two questions: To what extent is being intelligible, and to what extent is human language able to *adequately* express being? In order for any of these basic understandings of the nature of expressibility to function as a philosophical motivation for the critique of writing, it would need to preserve the distinction Socrates draws between spoken and written discourse. While there are very good reasons for seeing the distinction between spoken and written language as somewhat poorly drawn when seen simply as a distinction between media of expression,¹¹⁵ there is, nevertheless, a crucial distinction to be drawn here

reality are Hyland (see *Question of Beauty*, 93-94), Rhodes (see *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 25-31, 101-112), and Schindler (see *Plato's Critique*, 306, 334-335). As Schindler puts it, "political prudence is ultimately subordinate to metaphysical necessity in accounting for Plato's choice of the dialogue form and his ample use of irony and indirection" (50, note 28).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 160, Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 72-73, Desjardins, "Why Dialogues?" 111, Kenneth Sayre, "Plato's Dialogues in Light of the *Seventh Letter*," *Platonic Writings, Platonic*

between calcified, dead language and living language. Oral language-use can also calcify (as when one mindlessly repeats a poem, a song, a creed, a myth, a proverb, a formula, hearsay, etc.) and thus become subject to the critique of writing to the extent that the speaker is not speaking thoughtfully, *from her own soul*.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, there is still a meaningful distinction to be drawn between animate language (“speech living and ensouled,” 276a) and inanimate language.¹¹⁷ Through animate speech, one is able to “sow and plant” knowledgeable speeches in other souls, speeches which are “not fruitless but bear seeds from which other speeches, planted in other fields, have the means to pass this seed on, forever immortal, and to make the person possessing them as blessed as is humanly possible” (277a).¹¹⁸ Not every understanding of our capacity to express being will preserve a meaningful distinction between the respective capacities of animate and inanimate *logos*.¹¹⁹ Other understandings of our capacity to express being do preserve the distinction between animate and inanimate *logos* but fail, ultimately to cohere with other aspects of the dialogue’s vision. While it would be worth

Readings, 95-97, and especially Rabbås, “Writing, Memory, and Wisdom.” See also Doug Al-Maini, “Collection and Division in Plato’s Critique of Writing,” *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 35 (2015), 59.

¹¹⁶ See Rabbås, “Writing, Memory, and Wisdom,” 33-34, 41 and Hatab, “Writing Knowledge,” 326.

¹¹⁷ Note that at 264c-d, Socrates suggests that every speech (*logos*) is like a living thing (*zōon*) on account of its organic structure, whereas the inscription (*epigrammatos*) on Midas’s tomb, which has no organic structure, is associated with something dead.

¹¹⁸ Note that the planting metaphor reveals a feature that we have already associated with soul-leading endeavors: soul-leading can only be an auxiliary to something’s own native power, not a replacement for that power. Soul-leading speeches can “sow” ideas, but those ideas need to exercise their own capacity to grow and mature if they are to come to fruition (cf. Ch. 4).

¹¹⁹ Hyland lays out what he takes to be the three basic understandings of our capacity to express reality in *Finitude and Transcendence* (see 160-163). The first, “Thalesian” position, which takes the world to have a true and intrinsically knowable structure that is exhaustively knowable and articulable in human language, and the second, the “Anaximandrian position, which takes the world to have a basically indeterminate structure and is both unknowable and inarticulable on account of this indeterminacy, both collapse the distinction between animate and inanimate *logos* insofar as the Thalesians would see writing as no worse at articulating being and the Anaximandreans would so speaking as no better at articulating being. On the third position, see the next note.

discussing them in their own right, we will focus here on the understanding I take to be operative in the *Phaedrus* for the sake of brevity.¹²⁰

17. The view of our capacity to express being that I take to be at work in the *Phaedrus* is one which takes reality to be intrinsically intelligible (though we cannot ever have a truly comprehensive understanding of it such that nothing escaped our grasp) and which takes language to be naturally ordered to the disclosure of the truth we can come to know. In the *Palinode*, Socrates declares that he intends to speak the truth about the true nature of things (247c) and he includes even the most ineffable of subjects (i.e., “really real reality”) within the truth to be spoken. Though language cannot *exhaust* truth (we cannot “worthily” sign a hymn of the truth about truth; 247c), it can manifest the nature of reality sufficiently successfully so that, through language, one can lead another past language toward an actual contact with reality itself, as we will go on to discuss. Language can communicate (our insights into) the nature of reality—truly, but never exhaustively, adequately, or finally—and thus can lead the auditor’s soul into communion with reality.

18. As we’ve seen in our discussions of the *Palinode*, the *Phaedrus* presents the superheavenly realities, which inhabit the “Plain of Truth” (248b), as knowable. “This is the place of Being, the Being that truly is (*ousia ontōs ousa*)—colorless, shapeless, and untouchable, visible to the mind alone, the soul’s pilot, and the source of true knowledge” (247c). Socrates

¹²⁰ The third position on expressibility, which Hyland argues is Plato’s own, does preserve the key distinction between animate and inanimate *logos* and is thus a plausible philosophical motivation for the critique of writing. This “Xenophanean” position takes the world to have a true and intrinsically knowable structure (cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 240), but human beings are unable to come to certain knowledge about the world on account of their limitations (cf. Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 115). Hyland (alongside Griswold and Roochnik) gives a “tragic” interpretation of Plato’s putative Xenophanean position; cf. more recently Lavilla de Lera, “Prayer to Pan,” and Stephen Halliwell, “Where Are You Going and Where Have You Come From?: The Problem of Beginnings and Endings in Plato,” *Framing the Dialogues: How to Read Openings and Closures in Plato*, eds. Eleni Kaklamanou, Maria Pavlou, and Antonis Tsamakis (Boston: Brill, 2020), 13. There is no space to dispute the account developed by the “tragedians of reason” here.

clarifies that when he speaks of knowledge in reference to the superheavenly things, he does not mean knowledge in the looser sense of “knowing” the things subject to change, but instead the knowledge of what genuinely *is* (247d-e). Using metaphors of sight and ingestion, Socrates says that we “take in” the true realities when we manage to harmonize our souls sufficiently so that we are able to raise our charioteer’s heads out above the heavenly periphery (248a). Reality is not only knowable in principle; it is known *in fact* (albeit, most who know it have forgotten it).¹²¹ No soul can enter the human form unless it has already “seen” and “feasted upon” the superheavenly beings, however well or poorly (249b-c, 249e-250a). To be human, one must be able to understand things according to form. Even those souls who have forgotten what they once knew can be prompted into recollection. Nevertheless, though the superheavenly realities are knowable—and known—they are not comprehensively knowable by us. While this is due at least in part to our limitations—having heavy horses that drag us back down from the superheavenly place—the point is irreducible to such limitations, for even the gods cannot have comprehensive knowledge, despite the perfection of their orientation (even they, we recall, leave the sight of being incompletely initiated). As we argued above, reality itself is characterized by gratuitous, overflowing excess; it is always out beyond itself, always, in a sense, “more than” itself. The only thing that could comprehensively know a reality characterized in this way would be something entirely adequate to it.¹²² When we “see” reality, we genuinely do know something, but there’s always more to “see.”

¹²¹ As Pickstock has noted, forgetfulness of reality is “not a purely privative phenomenon, but itself discloses the nature of the good’s transcendence. The good is always more” (*After Writing*, 13).

¹²² See Perl, “The Demiurge and the Forms: A Return to the Ancient Interpretation of Plato’s *Timaeus*,” *Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 18 (1998) for an argument that the demiurge contains the forms as the content of its mind.

19. Though the true nature of things is intrinsically knowable, it is essentially ineffable; while we can say meaningful and true things about reality, we cannot give an exhaustive account of reality in language, whether spoken or written.¹²³ In order to clarify what ineffability means here and why it follows from our inability to exhaustively know the true nature of things, we have to clarify a bit more about what knowledge is. We should distinguish two senses of knowledge here: knowledge as mental *content* and knowledge as mental *contact*. As we noted above, for knowledge truly to be knowledge, we must have a kind of contact with the thing to be known (what we've been calling "communion"). The *event* of true knowing occurs when we are "with" the superheavenly things—when we "see" them and "feast upon" them and are nourished thereby. Doing so requires, as we've said, following the gods along the long, arduous journey up to the superheavenly place and breaching the heavenly periphery. But the feasting we experience "there" is no earthly "feasting," since the mode in which the soul feasts upon the true beings inverts a fundamental feature of our ordinary mode of ingestion: normally, when we "take in" food, we transform it into ourselves, such that ultimately nothing of the food remains, but when we "take in" this superheavenly "food," we are transformed into something more like it while it remains undiminished (cf. 246e, 247d-e).¹²⁴ Once we have taken in reality, we are able to recall what we had seen in memory. Memory is a way of bringing to mind what one had once experienced, a recollection of and reliving of the event of knowing contact. Though memory can reawaken in us the experience of that contact and thereby begin the process of regrowing our wings so that, upon death, we can return to the superheavenly place and make contact once more, memory itself is not itself contact. It is a mental content that has a particular relation to the event of mental contact.

¹²³ Cf., e.g., Sayre, "Plato's Dialogues," 104.

¹²⁴ On this, see Fussi, "As the Wolf Loves the Lamb," 61.

20. The ineffability of the superheavenly realities emerges from the distinction between mental contact and mental content. Though we can have a memory of our mental contact, whereby we relive the experience and re-experience the effects, certain things need to obtain in order to have mental contact again. Mental contact with the superheavenly realities is only possible for us if we have achieved a well-ordered internal harmony of the soul and if we lead-through (*diagein*) our lives in a way that is conducive to following the gods back to the superheavenly place. If our horses are not well-trained, their heaviness will hinder our capacity to follow the gods (compare the philosophical lovers' lives with those who, more coarsely, love honor rather than wisdom; 255e-256e). Indeed, leading-through a life in bad company or in the pursuit of injustice will hinder not only our capacity to achieve mental contact once more but also our capacity to even remember having done so in the past (see 250a, 250e); doing so will also hinder our capacity to correctly handle earthly reminders of the superheavenly realities such that we will fail to become "perpetually initiated into these perfect mysteries" (249c-d). Reality's self-disclosure cannot be adequately appreciated unless we are suited to receive it (even though, as we've argued, a partial reception of reality can be sufficient to begin the healing process whereby we might become adequate to see reality's self-showing).

21. Reality is ineffable to the extent that one's formation, way of life, and prior contact with reality is not transferrable to another in language, even if we can clarify through language what these necessary conditions for knowledge are and communicate our own experiences of them. One can say "you must become this kind of person, live this kind of way, and, in a word, become friends with reality" and be understood, but knowledge itself, as contact with reality, is not communicated thereby. We can communicate a mental content, but not a mental contact, even if, as we'll claim, the communication of a mental content may be sufficient to lead another to her own renewed memory of mental contact, such that she re-experiences its

effects. When we communicate a memory specifically, we can't actually communicate the first-personal experience of contact so much as describe that experience in terms that are inadequate to it, even if those terms are adequate to reminding another of her own first-personal experience of the same kind of event.

22. Insofar as the critique of writing voices a concern about a writer or a reader mistaking a written *expression* that comes out of a knowing contact with reality for that knowing contact itself (cf. 275c), there is a danger of reducing the mind's knowing *contact* with reality to the intellectual *content* it comes to possess as a result of that contact. In reducing contact, which only comes about through a certain way of life, to content, which is inscribable and thus transferable to another who could then take up that content as truth without any contact with reality of her own, we run the risk of absolutizing the content and thus distorting the character of knowledge.¹²⁵ As Hyland notes, this absolutization of the content, divorced from genuine contact, leads us to seek out "unimpeachable accounts" that we can take as certain and as a replacement for genuine contact.¹²⁶ When we seek out fixed *logoi* as sufficient for understanding rather than seek out the non-discursive insights that come by living a certain way and by being receptive to reality's self-manifestation we come into possession of a "sham" wisdom, not true wisdom, as the critique states.

¹²⁵ Intriguingly, possessing a mental content without the mental contact is, in some cases, sufficient for *using* knowledge productively even if it isn't sufficient for *understanding* what's known. Many high school math students, for example, memorize the Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) and can successfully use it to determine the length of the third side of a right triangle when the other two sides' lengths are known but have no idea why this should work because the geometrical significance of the theorem hasn't been disclosed (i.e., that the three terms of the equation are algebraic representations of squares drawn on the sides of the triangle). For a general treatment of this point, see Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry."

¹²⁶ Cf. Hyland, *Question of Beauty*, 7-8, 12, and 25 on the "hubris" of definitions. By contrast, see White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 260ff.

23. Language, then, can express reality, but it can't do so adequately, nor can it communicate one's own contact with reality to another. Because reality is characterized by being "always more" than itself, language can't pin it down in a final, definitive statement, and because knowledge of reality requires genuinely being together with reality, language can't adequately communicate one's knowledge insofar as it can't communicate the contact with the content. As Socrates says, no poet ever will ever *worthily* (*kat' axian*) sing a hymn about the superheavenly place (247c), and no writer who sows words in ink will ever adequately communicate what she seeks to communicate, for writing is "incapable of teaching the truth *adequately* (*bikanōs*)" (276c). We *can* express our insights into the deepest truths about reality (otherwise, Socrates wouldn't be able to give a mythic hymn about reality, which dares to say the truth about the true nature of things [247c], even if that mythic hymn can only offer an image of the truth, which cannot comprehensively reproduce the truth truly [265b-c]), and we can do so in a way that is meaningful and truth-disclosive, but we can't do so in a way that is sufficient for the auditor's own understanding, since our truth-disclosive expression can only ever serve as a mediating soul-leader, not the thing itself. We can plant fruit-bearing seeds in others through *logos*, but our own efforts can never be adequate to ensure their growth (277a).

24. In this regard, language itself appears to have an ontological status akin to soul-leading images. Like images, our words are always inadequate representations of the things to which they refer (though images refer specifically via some kind of likeness, whereas words do not, generally, rely on likenesses for their referential capacity). Like images, our words are, in a sense, ontologically dependent on the realities they seek to disclose. This is not because the realities have caused those words to exist, but because the words can't perform their function well (i.e., leading the soul; 271c) without latching onto the nature of that of which the word is a word (cf. 263a-d, 265d); that is, words derive their basic capacity ultimately from their

relation to reality. The *artful* use of words, further, requires recognition of truth (259e, 260e), without which any successful psychagogic effects of words would be accomplished artlessly, through experience and chance. This is true even if one intends to *mislead* someone by words; as Socrates argues, only one who recognizes truth could artfully lead her auditor from truth to falsity (262a-b), and she will do so by exploiting the similarities between things.¹²⁷ Like images, then, words also are met by us as sources of ambiguity. We can be led by words to truth, and we can, it seems, even be artfully led to falsity by well-chosen words.¹²⁸ Further, words can, like images, be the occasions for our own self-misleading, even if we tend to obscure this point by thinking (as Phaedrus does; cf. 268a) that it is the (artless) rhetorician who has such magical power over words as to effect our deception. Rhetoricians who mislead people by means of something other than truth (i.e., the plausible argument, public opinion) don't artfully persuade people; indeed, they might not even persuade people at all if their persuasive capacity rests on studying public opinion, for, in such a case, they've merely evoked what their audience already takes to be true (cf. 259eff.). Such rhetoricians can certainly produce a multitude of effects in their audience (just as an artless "doctor" can induce vomiting), but producing such effects doesn't amount to persuasion or actually leading the soul.

25. Words don't lead souls simply through producing various effects (e.g., affective responses) or by being deployed in various literary techniques (as presented in the rhetorical manuals), but by presenting to the soul something like an image of reality, by which the soul

¹²⁷ That is, the capacity to mislead a soul artfully comes about on account of the fact that words are oriented to being, as we'll soon discuss. The artful soul-misleader doesn't so much obscure this image-like referentiality but instead exploits it and the auditor's insufficient capacity to attend to the distinctions between things.

¹²⁸ Presumably, however, if such would-be soul-misleaders knew the truth, they would recognize the disvalue in truly misleading people (one might, perhaps, mislead someone for pedagogical purposes with an eye toward ultimately leading her to truth, as Socrates might be taken to do in his first speech, but one who sees truth truly would not, I think, desire to mislead someone to falsity simply).

can be transported from an earthly reminder to the superheavenly beings the soul had once seen and can be prompted to recall. Schindler captures this aspect of soul-leading words well:

But—and this is the crucial point—Plato recognizes that it is not possible to lead souls without taking them somewhere; leading necessarily presupposes a destination, and that destination cannot in this case be finally anything other than being. Words do not lead us simply to the thoughts, beliefs, impressions of other souls, but, if they lead to these, they also lead through them always ultimately to reality itself. Thoughts and beliefs, after all, are not just of thoughts and beliefs, but are inevitably about something, as Plato makes clear in the *Parmenides*: [...]. The power of words, according to Plato, does not come principally from the speaker, but from the reality spoken about, of which language is a more or less adequate image (see *Crat.* 393c-394a). The most basic purpose of words, as Plato says repeatedly, is quite simply to “make clear the nature of the things that are,” which is to say, to manifest being.¹²⁹

Words gain whatever psychagogic power they have from their capacity to present reality in a form that is accessible to mortal souls on earth whose memory of reality is obscured, and not, ultimately, from anything else. In this way, they act like images in their capacity to remind us of what we once knew. And as with images, we can learn to “see through” words to the realities they present; the more truth-oriented the word, the more it can act as a diaphanous window by which reality might be revealed. Finally, as with images, we can see that words are *by nature* truth-directed even if they can also be *misdirected* toward falsity, for, like images, they get their character and their psychagogic capacities, ultimately, from that to which they refer.

26. It is noteworthy that this account of language’s capacity to manifest reality does not automatically evacuate reality of any abiding mystery (as would accounts that take reality to be exhaustively articulable), but it does require us to think about the meaning of mystery differently. Rather than consider mystery negatively as “that which is intrinsically exhaustively knowable but currently unknown,” we can think of mystery as something with an abidingly positive character: mystery is what is intrinsically inexhaustible, and so is irreducible to

¹²⁹ Schindler, “Language as Technē,” 98-99; cf. McCoy, “Alcidamas, Isocrates, and Plato,” 19-20. For the *Parmenides* reference, wherein the interlocutors agree that thought is about being, see 132b-c. For the purpose of words being manifestation, see *Cratylus* 422d, as well as 393d, 428e, 436e, *Sophist* 263b, and *Gorgias* 453a. Gurtler also takes language to be an image of reality (on the basis of the *Republic*), though he stresses the distortions that come about in the distance between image and imaged; see “Distorted City,” 126, 132-134.

linguistic expression because there's always "more" to be seen and "feasted upon" than we could ever tell. What makes something mysterious is not the limitation of my capacity to understand but instead the inexhaustibility of that which is to be understood—there's "always more" to know.¹³⁰

27. Though it is true that the most fundamental truths can't *simply* be said, it is not true that they *simply* can't be said. Though it is true that I can *never exhaust the deepest truths* in words, it also true that I can *never exhaust my words* for the deepest truths. Though our non-discursive insights (realized in contact with reality) are irreducible to any discursive formulation, the discursive formulation can act as an "iconic" window through which we apprehend the non-discursive insight. The expression of the deepest truths can't be divorced from the right way of leading-through one's life, wherein one knows how to handle reminders and can see-through earthly images to their superheavenly originals. But when one has come to lead-through a well-oriented life, one will be serious about communicating the things to which one has become oriented: "what is just, beautiful, and good" (276c, 278a; cf. 276e-277a).

§4.4. Writing as Iconic Image: Co-Manifestation and Cooperative Descent

28. Having discussed the nature of expressibility, and having previously discussed the nature of images, we can now return to the critique of writing. If we understand *logos*, whether written or spoken, as in some sense imitative of being, the critique of writing transforms. There are two key points to be made here. First, we can preserve the critique and its ambiguities by

¹³⁰ For this "always more to be seen" sense of mystery, see, e.g., Pickstock, *After Writing*, 13, Pieper, *Enthusiasm*, 77, and, more generally, Schindler, *Catholicity*, Ch. 7. Notably, under such an interpretation of the mysteriousness of reality, one can comfortably uphold both the Socratic aporetic approach and the interpretation of Plato which sees Plato as thinking that we can have genuine knowledge, because the presence of genuine knowledge does not exclude the presence of genuine ignorance, since there is always more to be known about the realities we come to know. Indeed, coming to know something about those realities would drive us to seek them out further by revealing to us just how desirable they are.

utilizing the icon/idol distinction. Recall from §2.4 that we distinguished iconic images from idolatrous images by their modes of intentionality (icons point beyond themselves to that of which they are the images, whereas idols refuse to point beyond themselves to that which they image). Second, and more importantly, the fecundity of the image (the fact that images “add” to what they image in their imaging) allows us to rethink writing, even to celebrate it, as a privileged way in which we can creatively cooperate with reality’s self-manifestation.¹³¹

29. Phaedrus suggests, and Socrates enthusiastically agrees, that writing is an image (*eidōlon*) of the living and ensouled speech of the knower (276a).¹³² As we’ve discussed, we can behold (*theōntai*) “the original of the thing imaged” through images (*eikōnas*) (250c) when we approach images correctly. Given that writing is identified as an image, the same should obtain. As we discussed previously, images, however, can be *mistaken* as if they were themselves realities; when they are mistaken in such a way, they become idols, images wherein the intentional reference to the original imaged is obscured and ignored. Writing, when taken as an idol—that is, when the iconic character and other-centric intentional reference that is intrinsic to the image fails to be appreciated—does exactly what Socrates suggests it does: it masquerades as something solid, something which I can falsely consider as a permanent externalized memory.¹³³ Writing becomes an idol when it is reduced to encoded ‘information.’ As we in the Googling and Wikipedia age have learned, the omnipresence and availability of

¹³¹ Accordingly, we might say that writing is the *completion* of the philosophical life—Socrates’s own life notwithstanding—rather than being something *merely* instrumental to the philosophical life, as Ferrari suggests (see *Listening to the Cicadas*, 224). Rather, as Schindler says, “a grasp of the good as the principle of knowledge [per *Republic* VI] implies *both* that things like writing and poetry are inadequate and thus dangerous, *and also* that they make philosophy better” (*Plato’s Critique*, 306). Similarly, Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy*, 63-64, 137.

¹³² Cf. White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 256. If animate *logos* has an ontological character similar to images, as we argued in §4.3, then writing has the ontological character of being an image of something like an image, for writing is said to be an image (*eidōlon*) of “speech living and ensouled” (276a), which can be “written” into souls. Writing would be an image of spoken language, which is itself an image of reality.

¹³³ Likewise, see *Sophist* 234c.

information does indeed confer a “sham” wisdom. When we substitute a written image of living discourse for living discourse and when we allow the apparent permanence of the written image to obscure the features of living discourse that *make it alive*, we will obscure our contact with reality and deceive ourselves. Most likely, we will fall into what the *Phaedo* calls “misology,” a hatred of reason, which occurs on account of naively trusting in rational accounts and being “burned” by them when they turn out to be false (see 89d).

30. To say, however, that writing is, at best, a reminder (*hupomnēma*) is not, as it may seem, a denigration of writing, but a recalling of its actual ontological status as image, which is ordered *per se* to that of which it is an image, namely, to living discourse and the reality that is to be manifest in and through living discourse, which is known by the knower. The “reminders” (*hupomnēmata*), as images which point past themselves to the memories (*mnēmai*) and things remembered that are their essential reference, have to be “handled correctly” (249c), something which the idolater of writing fails to do. Though Socrates qualifies the utility of writing as being a reminder *only* for those who know, we should recall that all humans always already “know,” for no soul, according to the Palinode’s myth, is allowed to enter a human form unless it has seen the superheavenly beings.¹³⁴ Every writing, insofar as it is an image, has the potential to remind us of that about which the writing discourses (though an individual written composition’s capacity to do so will be correlated to its artfulness).¹³⁵ What’s more, by

¹³⁴ On this basis, we can argue against the tragedians of reason that the *Phaedrus*’s vision is not intrinsically tragic, for reality has always already given itself over to us and bridged the gap such that we can come to a genuine recognition of and communion with it. There are still tragedies that take place in such a universe, even one structured by the gods’ providential care, such as that of the historical Phaedrus, but those tragedies are caused by human moral error and bad luck, not the play of an indefatigable drive for wisdom and an ontological incapacity for wisdom. We aren’t, as the tragedians think, characterized by a boundary-defying hubris because there is, in a sense, no boundary to be crossed, since Beauty has always already crossed it for us.

¹³⁵ As Socrates says of Lysias, “Even the worst prose writer has some merit” (235e). This is because, as we suggested earlier, language only gets its power from truth, even if language can be *abused* so as to be directed away from truth. Just as we can’t desire something except as good, and so the only way to go

writing artfully, we create iconic images by which other souls might be reminded of the superheavenly truths they have forgotten; we, in a sense, *adorn* the cosmos with more beautiful images whereby souls can be transported to Beauty, to Justice, and to the other lovely forms (we'll return to this point in a moment).

31. When we treat images and reminders as idols, we are necessarily frustrated by them, even if we don't realize it, for we are treating them as something *other* than what they are. They cannot, then, furnish us with that which we hope to get out of them, since they are not the "of which" and only have its properties derivatively.¹³⁶ Socrates even suggests that treating images and reminders as idols is a form of injustice, as when writings are "ill-treated and unjustly abused" and thus need the help of their "fathers" to defend them, since they cannot defend themselves (275e).¹³⁷ It is, it would seem, an act of unjust abuse to demand that a writing speak for itself as if it were ensouled when it cannot do so, since it is an inanimate image of ensouled speech rather than ensouled speech itself.¹³⁸ Justice itself requires that we treat this writing, this image, *as* an icon, not as an idol—that is, justice requires us to see that the image points beyond itself and can't be treated as a self-contained reality. Justice requires

bad is to desire an inferior good in place of a greater good, so we can't promote falsity except in terms of some (inferior) truth.

¹³⁶ Hence the criticism that writing is silent, can't answer our questions, can't defend itself, etc. The point is not that the writing says anything *false* (though of course it may do so); indeed, it may very well speak completely truly (if not, as per earlier arguments, the complete truth). But it is still fundamentally dependent on a *living* contact with that about which it speaks (cf. 276a). See White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 255. See also McCoy, "Alcidamas, Isocrates, and Plato," 17: "While Alcidamas sees the written word as a mere imitation of the spoken word, for Socrates the written word is a reminder of the spoken word, which is *itself* only a reminder of the beautiful that we love but are always in danger of forgetting. All *logoi* are only reminders of what the human soul loves and tries to recall; all words are secondary."

¹³⁷ Cf. *Theaetetus* 164c-e, 167e and *Sophist* 243d-e. Osborne connects the orphaned written *logos* being unable to defend itself from unscrupulous literary critics to the beloved of the anti-erotic discourses who is being chased by monomaniacal suitors (see "Seduction of the Word," 273).

¹³⁸ Notably, Socrates himself seems to do exactly the thing he here decries when he takes Lysias's speech as Lysias himself (228e: "when Lysias is actually present among us"). If Socrates were to go back and say that Lysias is "present" in the sense in which an original is present in and to its image, then his point could be salvaged without contradiction. As it stands, however, he seems to be guilty of his own accusation.

us to address the thing imaged, beyond but present in the image. In a surprising sense, that justice requires “giving each its due” means that justice requires giving images their due. To give images their due, to be just toward images, is to recognize them fundamentally as good and beautiful. Of course, this does not mean that we should recognize them as good and beautiful *in the same way* as we should recognize as good and beautiful that of which they are the images, for one is prior and the other posterior, but their inferiority is by no means a sign of badness. But this vertical distinction in levels of goodness is precisely why images, and why writing (and, we can add, why bodies and sensation), are always going to confront us as ambiguous. There will always be a danger that we will fail to see the image as icon, and instead take it as idol, because of our own lack of attention.¹³⁹

30. The inadequacy of the image is dangerous, *but it is also fruitful*.¹⁴⁰ Images, as we said above, in a sense *add* something to that which they image when they individuate the original. Though no image is adequate to its original, each image allows that original to present itself anew, in a new mode. In our loving desire to become like what’s ultimate—the Good, the Beautiful—we imitate it *by creating*, whether in the form of procreation, speech-making, or whatever else gives us a share in its eternity (see 277a).¹⁴¹ If our goal is to become like the god whom we followed as much as humanly possible (see 253a; cf. *Theaetetus* 176a-b), then, like the

¹³⁹ Cf. Gonzalez, “Power and Ambivalence,” 47. With respect to bodies, it is worth noting that the common Greek expression “the body is a tomb” (*sōma ... sēma*) is itself ambiguous, since a *sēma* is also a sign, pointing beyond itself. If we think of the body as a sign or an image, then we have some reason to see it as being ambiguous in the same way that writing and images are. It is a source of danger to the extent that it is made an idol, but it can also disclose reality when it’s taken as an image (as when the lover’s memory is carried back to Beauty upon seeing the beloved’s beautiful body; 254b).

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Schindler, *Plato’s Critique*, 306 and *Freedom From Reality*, 310-311. Paul Ricoeur’s language of “iconic augmentation,” which he applies to writing, is particularly suitable for the view we are putting forward; cf. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 40. As the Socrates elsewhere suggests, the work of love—“giving birth in the beautiful (*tokos en kalōi*)”—is fruitfulness (*Symposium* 206b).

¹⁴¹ Likewise, see *Symposium* 207d-209e, 210d, 212a.

gods, we will seek to become maximally erotic (that is, we will seek to love what's ultimate in the superheavenly place most completely). But since the thing we love is itself always out beyond itself in its descent into images, our love will draw us back down to earthly images.¹⁴² As we argued above, to be maximally erotic culminates in being maximally "epimeletic," or caring. To love Beauty requires loving beautiful things and caring for them, so that their beauty *shines*. If we've come into communion with reality, we will want to ensure that earthly images of reality shine, and we can do so by writing, which is a way of imaging reality. We care for reality by contributing to its self-diffusive shining.¹⁴³ Our own self-diffusion is ordered, cooperatively, to the providential order of the gods, who, in their care, seek to make everything turn out best (cf. 242c-d, 273e-274b).¹⁴⁴

31. Insofar as language is the fundamental way by which we engage with being, and insofar as language is fundamentally ordered to truth, which is the manifestation of being to the intellect, then human linguisticity is *essentially* a creative cooperation in reality's self-manifestation.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps even the gods engage in the dialogical disclosure of being, as the

¹⁴² Socrates claims to be "greedy for images" in the *Republic* (488a); the sense of this remark is, I think, to be found in the sense of desiring reality so completely that one also wants reality's self-presentations, not just reality itself.

¹⁴³ The portrayal of the philosopher in the *Sophist* exemplifies this imitative self-diffusion. The philosopher appears in a variety of guises (216c-d) and is difficult to make out clearly because of his overwhelming brightness (254a-b, in imitation of the Good's overwhelming brightness in the first blindness of *Republic* 518a). See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 170. J.R.R. Tolkien, who has perhaps developed this idea most profoundly, calls what we are calling here co-manifestation, "sub-creation" and "co-creation"; see "On Fairy Stories," in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2012). We see Tolkien's notion of "sub-creation" paradigmatically in the fictional creation story of the world of the *Lord of the Rings* in the opening chapter of *The Silmarillion*.

¹⁴⁴ Cf., e.g., Desjardins, *Plato and the Good*, 160. Though there is no space to do so here, this point could be clarified by a careful reading of the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology* on piety, for those dialogues suggest that piety is a kind of "care" for the gods which shows itself in serving them by contributing to their own task, a task which Socrates interprets as battling ignorance and hubris (per the Delphic inscriptions), for which he is willing to die.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *Sophist* 262d: when one speaks, one "indicates something about the things that are [...]. He doesn't merely name but brings something to closure by weaving together verbs with nouns."

myth of the creation of writing portrays (274c-275b).¹⁴⁶ Insofar as knowledge of reality needs not just the erotic “ascent” but also the “descent” in order to be fulfilled, our knowledge of reality positively requires creative expression in language, in which we contribute to being’s self-manifestation.¹⁴⁷ Writing, which, as a reminder, is fundamentally an image, is expressive of a reality beyond itself. “Beyond” is here just as fruitfully ambiguous as writing—it means both that it points to the source beyond itself, and also to the creative outflow of that very same thing.¹⁴⁸ Understood thus, the “critique of writing” turns out to be a celebration of the human capacity to participate in the divine plan of manifesting being, or, as the *Seventh Letter* puts it, “leading-forth reality into light” (*eis phōs proagagein*) (341d-e; translation modified). We write in cooperation with being’s self-revelation.

32. The third movement of the divine dance is completed, then, in one’s cooperation with reality. By “completed” I don’t mean to indicate that the dance itself ends when we cooperatively descend, but rather that the dance is fulfilled when we do so. Human participation in the dance during incarnate life requires a continual series of ascents in memory and descents in action, and our cooperative comportment is fragile. But we can also continually renew our “vows” to the reality to which, in DuBois’s language, we’ve been “wed.” We bear

¹⁴⁶ Cf. White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 253-254.

¹⁴⁷ The basic site of such receptively creative expression is the *seminar* (etymologically, the place in which seeds are sown), and writing is an analogous extension of that seed-sowing activity of language (276d). Cf. White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 150, 256-260 on sowing *logoi*, and 265 for how the dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus progressively unfurls the nature of the matter at hand (i.e., how those spermiatic *logoi* germinate). In *Image and Argument*, McCoy similarly speaks of the “ascent” and “descent” as two movements in the same progression of philosophical conversion; when one “descends” after having ascended to a vision of the forms, one will seek “to integrate the encounter with the forms into the everyday world and its concerns” (227) and to give verbal expression to one’s insights and thereby open them up for dialectical testing (46-48); cf. 139-140.

¹⁴⁸ This fruitfully ambiguous “beyond” is evident in one’s *receptively* creative engagement with a text, wherein one can, in a sense, “go beyond” the author with whom one is thinking even as one roots oneself firmly in that author’s corpus by teasing out implications, uncovering unrealized possibilities, and generating new interpretations. Cf., e.g., Davies, “Heidegger’s Reading(s),” 194. Augustine develops a similar point; cf. *Confessions* XII.18.27, 26.36, 31.42.

witness to those vows by living accordingly. Writing, by which the truth of the forms can be communicated across time, across space, across language, and across culture, is a paradigmatic way of cooperating with reality's self-disclosure, for it presents reality's self-disclosure in time in a way that is proportionate to eternity, in a way that is accessible, in principle, to all peoples at all times. Though there are legitimate dangers to writing, writing is also our way of extending our insights into reality and passing them down for others.

33. Writing is a way not only of bearing witness to, but also of augmenting, reality's self-revelation, for one presents reality's self-manifestation to another. Hermias, the Neoplatonist commentator who is well-attuned to the fact that the philosopher must go back down into the cave, begins his commentary with the claim that "Socrates was *sent down* into [the realm of] generation *as a service* to the race of men and the souls of the young."¹⁴⁹ We are all sent down in service. All of us must return to the cave. This is not ultimately because we *can't* live outside the cave on account of some overbearing feature of our finitude but because we *want* to return to the cave out of a desire to love not just *The Good* and *The Beautiful* (the absolute *as if* the relative were irrelevant) but out of a desire to love *The Good* and *The Beautiful absolutely* (to love the Good and the Beautiful "wherever they appear"). When we *cooperatively* descend, we transform our relationship to the cave such that we come to see, for the first time, the way in which the light of the sun (and thereby the Good) penetrates even to the furthest, darkest recesses of the cave. *All that is, is lovable. All that is, is worthy of our care. Our task is to make all things "shine."*

34. Though I've just characterized this "task" as a kind of service, a characterization that seems to gain the weight of drudgery insofar as it is seen in light of Socrates's command

¹⁴⁹ Hermias, *Scholia*, 1.5-6. Cf. Schindler, *Plato's Critique*, 270-273.

that we go back into the cave, the place wherein we are likely to die for bearing witness to truth, this “task,” while serious, is not one which we will undertake simply because we must. If we’ve actually come into communion with reality and recognized something akin to what the gods recognize, we will see this “task” as something desirable in itself. Just as the gods are led down to beautiful images by their desire for Beauty, so we too will be led down into service on account of our desire, just as the divinely-mad lover serves his beloved out of desire and gratitude. Rather than being an act of drudgery, this service to reality is actually a form of *play*, as Socrates indicates. In offering a hymn to reality, Socrates engaged in a form of serious play (see 265b-c).¹⁵⁰ For the serious dialectician, who endeavors to sow animate seeds in other souls, such that other souls, too, can see and speak to something of goodness, beauty, and justice, writing is a form of play (277e-278a). Writing is play precisely because writing is a form of image-making; given the non-finality of images, any image-crafting must not take itself too seriously if it is to be true to what it is doing. While images are, as we’ve argued, not only tremendously significant for us, but even our entryway into reality, they are only such because they *constitutionally* don’t take themselves seriously—instead, they point beyond themselves: “don’t look at me, look at what I’m playfully representing.” Iconic images, like writing, are forms of play. Indeed, the realm of ordinary human activity is a form of play, and it can be experienced as such so long as we always remember that the things of our ordinary experience are iconic images; the moment we idolatryze the aspects of our ordinary experience is the moment we evacuate our experience of all playfulness. Consistent with our palinode to Boreas in Ch. 5, we might also give a palinode to Oreithuia: it is *good* that she was playing with

¹⁵⁰ In the *Sixth Letter*, the author claims that play and seriousness are sisters (323d), suggesting that the two should go hand in hand. Nicholson quotes Hermann Gundert as saying “the more [Socrates] is dealing with philosophically-minded people, the more he is inclined to describe their dialogue as play” (*Philosophy of Love*, 28); that is, playfulness is an index of philosophical seriousness, not of falsity, as some take it.

Pharmakeia (229c), for Pharmakeia (who here is a stand-in for writing and other image-play) is the nature of the realm of our experience, with which we ought to play and which immediately becomes a poison the moment we misunderstand it (for example, by preferring it to the divine). Playing with Pharmakeia is, perhaps, *exactly* the condition under which we are swept up by the truly divine Boreas (even if *indulging* too seriously in *pharmaka* is the condition under which we are swept up by that false, rapacious image of Boreas).

35. By writing this dialogue for us, Plato himself has “gone down” into the cave, has cooperated, playfully, with reality’s self-disclosure. Plato has made certain things “shine” such that the readers of the *Phaedrus* can’t help but be illuminated by and glory in its portrayal of love and of language. Plato has “shone” a light on love and on language, such that we can see these fundamental features of human life for what they are—soul-leaders which can lead us back to the brilliant source of light. By being illuminated thus, love and language themselves are given the capacity to illuminate reality. Every time we speak, and in all acts of love, we *cast a light* on something. Soul-leading is the way in which human beings can cooperate in reality’s illuminative self-manifestation. It is how we liberate those who are in the cave so that they may inhabit the cave anew, recognizing the way in which goodness and beauty are shot through reality as a whole, shot through even into the lowest reaches of the cave. In shining a light on us, Plato has given us the remarkable task of shining light on reality for others. We ourselves must “go down,” and we must do so just as playfully, even though the matter is serious. We must, in cooperation with reality itself, *show* that “the appearances are a vision of the unseen” (*opsis gar tōn adelōn ta phainomena*; Anaxagoras Fr. B2a).

Appendix: ‘Agogic’ Language in the *Phaedrus*

TABLE I: Uses By Term		
Word/Form, Location	Function	Sentence
<i>Agein</i> and <i>Agein</i>-compounds		
<i>Agein</i> (24) —Lead; carry; convey; bring; take with one; carry off (as captive or plunder); to import; to lead toward, lead on; to educate, bring up; to keep in memory; to hold, celebrate, observe; to believe in (like <i>hegeomai</i>); to weigh; Mid: to carry away for oneself, take with one		
<i>eges</i> , 230a7	Dramatic	S: But, my dear companion, while we’ve been talking, haven’t we reached the tree to which you were leading us?
<i>agousin</i> , 230d8	Dramatic	S: Just like dangling green branches or fruit of some kind in front of a hungry animal to lead him on , so you are likely to <i>lead me through</i> (<i>periaxein</i>) all of Attica or anywhere you want, simply by holding words in a book in front of my nose.
<i>agele</i> , 237a7	Dramatic/Divine	S: Come , Muses, whether you are called sweet-voiced from the quality of your song or from your sweet Ligurian origins, “begin to sing with me” my fable, which this best of men at my side forces me to speak.”
<i>agonte</i> , 237d7.1	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Further, one must realize that in each of us there are two forces which rule and guide us and that we <i>follow</i> (<i>hepasthai</i>) both wherever they lead (<i>ageton</i>).
<i>ageton</i> , 237d7.ii	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Further, one must realize that in each of us there are two forces which rule and guide (<i>agonte</i>) us and that we <i>follow</i> (<i>hepasthai</i>) both wherever they lead .
<i>agousēs</i> , 237e3	Anthropology (internal order)	S: When right opinion with reason rules and leads toward the best, we call this moderation. But when desire irrationally <i>drugs</i> (<i>helkei</i>) toward pleasures and rules over us, we call this excess.
<i>agousa</i> , 238b3	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Or take the tyrannizing passion for wine, which leads a drinker in that direction; it is clear what name to call him.
<i>akthbeisa</i> , 238c1	Anthropology (internal order)	S: . . . when passion without reason rules over straight-minded opinion and is itself driven toward the pleasure of beauty, and, further, when this passion is violently moved by kindred desires toward the beauty of the body and is <i>victorious</i> (<i>nikēsasa agoge</i>), it takes its name from that very force and is called love.
<i>agousa</i> , 240c2	Anthropology (internal order)	S: This is so, I suspect, because those of like age are attracted to similar pleasures and form friendships from similar experiences. . .
<i>agei</i> , 240d2	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Day and night the older man hangs around with the youth and is never willing to go away, but is driven on by a compulsion and a sting which bring him pleasure and drive him on whenever he sees, hears, touches, or senses the beloved, so that he waits happily on the beloved, hand and foot.
<i>agein (ami)</i> , 246d6	Anthropology (external order)	S: By its nature the wing’s natural capacity is to convey what is weighty upward and to roam among the stars where the race of the gods dwell. . .
<i>agousin</i> , 253b7	Anthropology (external order)/ interpersonal	S: . . . when they acquire him they themselves imitate the god and persuade and discipline the darling, leading him into the service and ways of the god, according to each one’s ability.
<i>agein</i> , 253c2	Anthropology (external order)/ interpersonal	S: They do so without envy or stingy ill-will toward the darling but in the hope that, trying as hard as they can, they may lead the loved one wholly and entirely to resemble both themselves and the god whom they honor.
<i>agomeni</i> , 254b2	Anthropology (internal order)	S: . . . feeling forced to engage in terrible and unlawful acts, but finally when they find no end to this vice they follow along passively , both of them yielding and agreeing to do whatever is commanded.

<i>egagen</i> , 255a7	Anthropology (external order)/ interpersonal	S: But with the passage of time, his age and necessity compel the boy to admit the lover into his company, as it has never been ordained by fate that vice be dear to vice or that good not be dear to good.
<i>agagonta</i> , 256a8	Anthropology (internal order)	S: So if the better parts of discursive thinking prevail, as they lead toward a regimented life and a love of wisdom, then all involved <i>enjoy</i> (<i>diagēin</i>) a blessed and harmonious life here on earth.
(<i>eis phōs</i>) <i>agein</i> , 261e4	Interpersonal/ Dialectical	S: ...when someone else makes these similarities but hides the fact that he is doing so, to bring this to light .
<i>agein</i> , 265d3	Dialectical	S: The first involves someone whose sight can bring into a single form things which have previously been scattered in all directions so that by defining each thing he makes clear any subject he ever wants to teach about.
<i>agagon</i> , 266a6	Dialectical	S: ... the other speech, however led us to the madness on the right side and discovered there a love with the same name as the other but of some divine nature.
<i>agomen</i> , 267a3	Dramatic/ Dialectical	S: Shall we not bring the most elegant Euenos from Paros into our circle...
<i>Agētai</i> , 273b6	Dramatic/ Dialectical	S: Apparently having discovered this wise—and artful—technique, Tisias wrote that if a weak but brave man clobbers a strong but cowardly man and steals his cloak or something and is then dragged into court, it is imperative that neither man tell the truth.
<i>Agai</i> , 279a8	Anthropology (external order) / Divine	S: ... but if the present pursuits should not satisfy him an even more divine passion might lead him into greater heights.
<i>Agein</i> , 279c2	Anthropology (internal order)	S: May I consider the wise man rich and have only as much gold as a moderate man can carry and use .
Agōgē (1) —A carrying away; a bringing to; a leading to; training, education; abduction		
<i>Agōgēi</i> , 238c3	Anthropology (internal order)	S: ... when passion without reason rules over straight-minded opinion and is itself <i>driven</i> (<i>achtheisa</i>) toward the pleasure of beauty, and, further, when this passion is violently moved by kindred desires toward the beauty of the body and is victorious (<i>nikeasasa agōgēi</i>), it takes its name from that very force and is called love.
Apagein (1) —Lead away; carry off; retire, withdraw; bring back, bring home; to return what one owes; to carry to prison		
<i>Apagon</i> , 262b7	Interpersonal / Dialectical	S: Will it be possible, then, for a man with art to lead anyone incrementally, step by small step, through similarities away from the truth to its opposite ...
Anagein (1) —To lead up (from lower, to the high sea); to take up from the coast into the interior; to bring up from the dead; to bring up, bring back; to prepare		
<i>anagein</i> (<i>ano</i>), 272d3	Dialectical	S: Well now, they say there's no need to reverse these matters so or to climb such a long and circuitous path ...
Diagein (7) —Carry over, across; pass time; pass life; delay; continue, make continue; entertain		
<i>diagagei</i> , 248e4	Anthropological	S: In all these men, the one who lives justly has a better portion; they one who lives unjustly, a worse portion.
<i>Diagousin</i> , 249a8	Anthropological	S: ... pay their penalty, or, made airborne by Justice, they go to a place in the heavens and live a life worthy of the one they lived in their human form.
<i>Diagousin</i> , 256b1	Anthropological / Interpersonal	S: So if the better parts of discursive thinking prevail, as they <i>lead</i> (<i>agein</i>) toward a regimented life and a love of wisdom, then all involved enjoy a blessed and harmonious life here on earth.
<i>Diagousi</i> , 256d1	Anthropological / Interpersonal	S: When in love and later when out of love, these two also go through life as friends with each other, although not so close as the philosophic couple ...
<i>Diagontas</i> , 256d8	Anthropological	S: It is the law for those who have already begun their journey in lower heaven that they shall not return to the dark path under the

		earth, but shall lead a bright life in blessed journeys with each other . . .
<i>Diagontas</i> , 259d4	Anthropological	S: But they report to Kalliope with the beautiful voice, the oldest of the Muses, and to heavenly Ourania, the second holdest, those who have gone through life loving wisdom and honoring their musical art . . .
<i>Diaxxi</i> , 276d8	Anthropological	S: But when others indulge themselves in other kinds of play, finding pleasure in drinking parties and whatever is related to these, our man, it seems, instead of this kind of play will engage in the things I've just mentioned.
Katagōgē / Katagōgion (2) —A bringing down (from sea, from a height); a halting place, resting place; bringing back from banishment		
<i>Katagoge</i> , 230b2	Divine	S: By Hera, it's a beautiful resting-place .
<i>Katagōgion</i> , 259a5	Divine	S: . . . they would justly laugh at us and believe that we were some slaves coming to a small resting place , like sheep sleeping around spring at noontime.
Xenagein (2) —Guide a foreigner; to lead mercenaries		
<i>Exxenagetai</i> , 230c5	Dramatic	S: I couldn't have hoped for a better guide , my dear Phaedrus.
<i>Xenagoumenoi</i> , 230c7	Dramatic	Ph: As you say, you seem like a foreigner being guided around rather than one from these parts . . .
Paragein (2) —March or bring around/toward; divert; mislead; produce; pass by, pass away		
<i>Paragon</i> , 261a2	Dialectical	Ph: We must hear these arguments, Socrates. Lead them out so we can review what they say and how they say it.
<i>Paragoi</i> , 262d2	Dialectical / Divine	S: By some chance, as it seems, both the speeches were models of sorts, revealing how someone who knows the truth could play around with words and lead his audience on . And, Phaedrus, I consider that the gods of this place are the cause of this . . .
Periagein (2) —Lead around, turn about		
<i>Periaxein</i> , 230e1	Dramatic	S: Just like dangling green branches or fruit of some kind in front of a hungry animal <i>to lead him on</i> (agein), so you are likely to lead me through all of Attica or anywhere you want, simply by holding words in a book in front of my nose.
<i>Periagei</i> , 247c1	Anthropology (external order) / Divine	S: But when those souls which we call immortal reach the summit of heaven, they go to the edge and stand on the rim; there the revolving motion carries them around as they stand and gaze on things outside the heavens.
Proagein (4) —Lead forward/on; persuade; advance; procure (a sexual object for someone), pimp		
<i>Proage</i> , 227c1	Dramatic	Ph: Lead on , then.
<i>Proagein</i> , 228c1	Dramatic	S: But coming upon the man who is made sick with desire just to hear speeches, Phaedrus, seeing him—merely seeing him—was delighted that he should have a fellow Bacchic reveler, and then he urged Socrates to lead on .
<i>Proage</i> , 229a7	Dramatic	S: Lead on then, and keep an eye out for a place to sit.
<i>Proagois</i> , 228b3	Dramatic	S: Won't you lead the way ?
Sunagein (1) —Bring together; match warriors; draw together; conclude, infer; bring about		
<i>Sunagagonte</i> , 256c3	Anthropology (external order)	S: But if they adopt a more coarse way of life, one that loves honor and not wisdom, then perhaps when drunk or in some other careless hour the couple's two unbridled horses will catch their souls unguarded and lead them forward to the same thing, namely to seize upon and carry out a course of action which many consider most blissful.
Sunagōgē (1) —A “collection” (as paired with a “division?”)		
<i>Sunagōgon</i> , 266b4	Dialectical	S: I myself am certainly a lover, Phaedrus, of these processes of division and collection , so that I may have the ability to speak and think.
Psuchagōgia (2) —Soul-leading; evocation of the dead; bewitching, charming, beguiling, necromancy		

<i>Psuchagogia</i> , 261a	Dialectical / Interpersonal	S: Isn't the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, a certain guiding of souls through words . . .
<i>Psuchagogia</i> , 271c	Dialectical / Interpersonal	S: Since the capacity of speech is to guide the soul , someone intending to become a rhetorician must know what forms the soul possesses.
Other uses of Soul-Leading language in Plato		
<i>Psuchagōgeō</i> (3)		
	Laws 909b.i, ii	Context: penalties for those who try to entice the souls of the living while pretending to entice the souls of the dead (atheists, anti-providentialists), who try to charm the gods for money
	Timaeus 71a	Context: the non-rational capacity's falling under the spell of images and phantasms
<i>Psuchagōgikos</i> (1)		
	Minos 321a	Context: tragedy is the most soul-enthraling branch of poetry
Words derived from <i>Agein</i>		
<i>Hēgemonikos</i> (1) —Characteristic of ruling/leading		
252e3	Anthropological	S: The followers of Zeus search for a beloved who is noble and Zeus-like in his soul, and they ask whether the beloved is by nature a lover of wisdom and a ruler .
<i>Hēgemōn</i> (1) —a ruler, leader		
246e4	Divine	S: So, then, the great leader in heaven, Zeus <i>takes the lead</i> , driving a winged team, arranging everything thoroughly and taking care of it.
<i>Hēgesthai</i> (24) —to think, to consider, to be led to think, to opine		
229d3		S: Although in some ways I find such explanations ingenious, Phaedrus, it's also true that they are the mark of a clever, hard-working, and not altogether fortunate man.
231b1		L: [lovers]. . . believe that they have already paid back a sufficient gratitude to those they once loved.
231d5		L: So how can these men, once they have regained their lost senses, possibly continue to hold those beliefs which they had when they were in the grip of love.
232b5		L: And another thing: perhaps you are afraid, thinking that it is difficult for friendships to last or that in other circumstances when a calamity arises both parties share the pain . . .
232d6		L: Rather, they [non-lovers] would despise those who won't associate with you on the assumption that they are being slighted and not benefitting from these encounters.
234c5		L: My words are, I trust, sufficient. But if you desire more, thinking that I have left something out, all you need do is ask.
234d4		S: Thinking that you perceived such matters better than I, I followed you throughout, caught up in a Bacchic frenzy with you, a divine source.
240a1		S: He would approved that the beloved be deprived of father, mother, relatives, and friends, on the assumption that they hinder and censor his own most pleasurable company with the boy.
242d9		S: Don't you believe that Eros is a god, the son of Aphrodite.
243c7		S: . . . how could you think that he would not believe that he was listening to people who had been raised among sailors and had never seen a noble form of love among the free?
244b7		S: Yet, it is also worthwhile to call upon the ancients as witnesses: as their names for things show, they did not think that madness was a cause for shame or blame.
247a3 [use of <i>hegecomai</i> as <i>agein</i>]	Divine	S: . . . Hestia, goddess of the Hearth, remains alone in the house of the gods. The rest are arranged in a group of twelve, taking their station according to their assigned rank. [they lead in the vanguard— <i>arcontes hegountai</i>]

256d2		S: When in love and later when out of love, these two also go through life (<i>diagein</i>) as friends with each other, although not so close as the philosophic couple, believing that they have given to each other and have received the greatest pledges which it would be a crime to break and feel enmity.
257d1		S: That's ridiculous, young man, and you are far off the mark about your companion if you really believe that he's so easily frightened off by noise like that.
258c3		S: ... doesn't he consider himself godlike when he's alive, and don't future generations believe the same things about him because of his writings?
259a4		S: ... they would justly laugh at us and believe that we were some slaves coming to a <i>small resting place</i> , like sheep sleeping around a spring at noontime.
260b3		S: ... but I happened to know that Phaedrus believed a horse was a tamed animal with very large ears ...
264b9		Ph: You're kind to think that I'm able to make such a critical assessment of his work.
266a3		S: ... so also the two speeches assumed that madness is by its nature one form in us, though capable of being divided into two.
266b5		S: If I believe that someone else has the capacity to see into a single thing and to see the natural outgrowth from a single thing toward many things, I <i>pursue</i> him, following "right behind in his tracks as if he were a god."
269c1		S: On this account, they think that they have discovered the rhetorical art when they know only its prerequisites; and teaching others these things they believe that they have taught the art perfectly ...
277d8		S: ... when writing something political proposing laws in the belief that his composition contains great lucidity and lasting value.
277e6		S: But it's a different matter for a person who believes that in a written speech on any subject there is necessarily much playfulness and that no speech, whether written in measured speech or not, can ever be taken too seriously ...
278a4		S: And he believes that the speeches of this sort should be regarded as his legitimate sons ...
Diēgēsis (2) —Narrative, examination, a leading-through		
<i>Diēgēsis</i> , 246a5	Dialectical	S: It would take a god and a long time to examine in every detail what kind of thing the form is, but human beings in a shorter amount of time can describe what she is like.
<i>Diēgesin</i> , 266e2	Dialectical	S: Second, there's the diegesis , or Exposition ...
Words for following		
Akolouthein (2) —to follow		
<i>Akolouthountas</i> , 232a7	Interpersonal	L: But non-lovers, possessing a measure of self-control, choose to do what is best rather than to follow in the footsteps of public opinion.
<i>Akolouthesousin</i> , 233e2	Interpersonal	L: These [the beggars in need] are the people who will adore you and follow you and come to your door and be especially pleased ...
Epakolouthein (1) —to follow close behind		
<i>Epakolouthēin</i> , 271e1		S: The aspiring rhetorician must think these matters through in a sufficient manner and then, after that, observing them in actuality and being lived out before his eyes, he must be able to trace these actions keenly and perceptively, or else he won't be any better off than he was when he was absorbing these words in school.
Diōkein (5) —to pursue		

<i>Diōkein</i> , 239c	Anthropology (internal order)	S: ... keeping in mind that the master is compelled to pursue pleasure rather than goodness.
<i>Diōkon</i> , 239c	Anthropology (internal order)	S: No doubt, the lover will be seen pursuing a boy who is soft and not vigorous ...
<i>Diōkein</i> , 241b	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Having completely failed to realize from the start that he should never have yielded to a lover and to one who is perforce mindless, the boy calls upon the gods in his anger and feels compelled to pursue .
<i>Diōkon</i> , 251a	Anthropology (internal order)	S: In company with wantonness, he shows no fear or shame as he pursues unnatural pleasure.
<i>Diōkeō</i> , 266b	Anthropology (external order) / Dialectical	S: If I believe that someone else has the capacity to see into a single thing and to see the natural outgrowth from a single thing toward many things, I pursue him, following “right behind (<i>katopisthe</i>) in his tracks, as if he were a god.”
<i>Ephepein</i> (1) —(<i>epi</i> + <i>hepesthai</i>)		
<i>Epispesthai</i> , 248c	Anthropology (internal order)	S: But whenever a soul cannot see the truth and is thus unable to follow the path, and by some misfortune gets weighed down ... then the following law applies.
<i>Helkein</i> (3) —to drag		
<i>Helkousēs</i> , 238a	Anthropology (internal order)	S: But when desire irrationally drags us toward pleasures and rules over us, we call this excess.
<i>Helkōn</i> , 254d.i	Anthropology (internal order)	S: But when the agreed-upon time is up and other two pretend to have forgotten, it reminds them both: forcing, snarling, dragging , it makes them approach the darling again to deliver the same words, and when they are near it pulls forward , head down, tail straight, biting on the bit, shameless.
<i>Helkei</i> , 254d.ii	Anthropology (internal order)	S: But when the agreed-upon time is up and other two pretend to have forgotten, it reminds them both: forcing, snarling, dragging , it makes them approach the darling again to deliver the same words, and when they are near it pulls forward , head down, tail straight, biting on the bit, shameless.
<i>hepesthai</i> (13)		
<i>Hepomēn</i> , 234d5.i	Dramatic / Interpersonal	S: Thinking that you perceived such matters better than I, I followed you throughout, caught up in a Bacchic frenzy with you, a divine source.
<i>Hepomenos</i> , 234d5.ii	Dramatic / Interpersonal	S: Thinking that you perceived such matters better than I, I <i>followed</i> you throughout, [following], caught up in a Bacchic frenzy with you, a divine source.
<i>Hepometha</i> , 237d7	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Further, one must realize that in each of us there are two forces which rule and <i>guide</i> (<i>agontē</i>) us and that we follow both wherever they lead (<i>agein</i>).
<i>Hepetai</i> , 239d2	Ordinary	S: No doubt, the lover will be seen pursuing a boy who is soft and not vigorous ... who decks himself out in fancy hues and cosmetics for want of natural color, and who attends to all the other sorts of things which follow along with these ways ...
<i>Hepomenōn</i> , 240d7	Ordinary	S: There are all sorts of other experiences [following such a thing] that are not pleasant even to hear about, not to mention that they are far more difficult to cope with when you are staring in the face of compulsion ...
<i>Hepetai</i> , 246e6	Divine	S: So, then, the <i>great leader</i> in heaven, Zeus takes the lead (<i>protos porentai</i>), driving a winged team, arranging everything thoroughly and taking care of it. An army of gods and daemons follow him, arranged in eleven contingents ...
<i>Hepetai</i> , 247a6	Divine / Anthropology (external order)	S: Whoever is willing and able can follow behind, since Envy stands outside the space of the divine dance.

<i>Hepomenē</i> , 248a2	Divine / Anthropology (external order)	S: Such is the life of the gods. But of the other souls, one follows a god very well and patterns herself after him, raising up the head of her charioteer to peer upon the place outside the heaven, and she is carried around with the gods in the revolving motion . . .
<i>Hepontai</i> , 248a7	Divine / Anthropology (external order)	S: But all of the remaining souls seek the upward path and are eager to follow but they lack the means and are carried around below the surface . . .
<i>Hepomenoi</i> , 250b7	Divine / Anthropology (external order)	S: Formerly, however, it was possible to look upon beauty in its radiance when in a blessed chorus-dance we in Zeus' entourage , and others in the company of other gods, witnessed a blest sight and spectacle . . .
<i>Heiponto</i> , 253b1	Divine / Anthropology (external order)	S: Those who follow Hera, in turn, seek a beloved who is regal in nature, and if they find him they do all the same things for him. Followers of Apollo and each of the other gods, proceeded in the manner of their god . . .
<i>Hepetai</i> , 254e7	Anthropology (internal order)	S: Only when it has suffered this same treatment repeatedly does the despicable creature cease its wanton excess. Humbled, in the end it follows the charioteer's plan, and when it sees the beautiful boy it is devastated by fear.
<i>Hepesthai</i> , 255a1	Interpersonal/ Anthropology (internal order)	S: Then at last it actually happens that the lover's soul follows the darling with awe and shame.
Other notable words		
<i>Hēniochein</i> (2) —To use the reins to steer horses		
<i>Hēniochai</i> , 246b2	Anthropology (internal order)	S: For us men, first of all, a charioteer rules over and guides a pair of horses, and secondly, one of these horses is noble and good and from like stock, but the other is the opposite and from opposite stock.
<i>Hēniocheitai</i> , 253e1	Anthropology (internal order)	S: . . . a lover of honor with a sense of moderation and shame and a companion of true opinion, without need of the whip, ruled by command and word alone.
<i>Hēniochēsis</i> (1) —The act of using reins to steer horses		
<i>Hēniochēsis</i> , 246b4	Anthropology (internal order)	S: So, for us chariot-driving must be difficult and irksome.
<i>Melein/Epimelcisthai/Meletan</i> (8) —To care		
<i>Meleto(i)ē</i>	228b	S: Then he was headed outside the city walls to practice it.
<i>Melon</i>	235a5	S: For he seemed to me, Phaedrus—unless you can show otherwise—to say the same thing two or three times over, as if he was not particularly adept at speaking in depth on the same theme; or perhaps such things did not concern him.
<i>Melēsai</i>	238d7	S: But this is in the hands of a god ; we, however, must turn our attention back to the boy in this speech.
<i>Epimelēitai</i>	246b6	S: Every soul takes care of everything which is soulless and she traverses the entire heaven, changing from one form to another.
<i>Epimeloumenos</i>	246e6	S: So, then, the <i>great leader</i> in heaven, Zeus <i>takes the lead</i> , driving a winged team, arranging everything thoroughly and taking care of it.
<i>Mele(i)</i>	247d2	S: Just as a god's discursive thinking is <i>nourished</i> (trophomene) by the mind and unmixed knowledge, so is the thought of every soul nourished by what is appropriate for her to receive.
<i>Memeletekos</i>	260c	S: So, when a rhetorician who is mindless of good and evil encounters a city in the same condition and attempts to persuade it, not by praising a mere shadow of an ass as if it were a horse but by praising evil as good, and by carefully studying public opinion, he persuades the city to do evil things rather than good ones . . .

<i>Meletōn</i>	269d5	S: If you have an innate ability for rhetoric, you'll become a famous rhetorician, provided that you acquire knowledge and work at your art . . .
<i>Meleîn</i>	272d9	S: People in the courts couldn't give a fig for the truth about such matters, only for what is persuasive.
<i>Meletan</i>	274a	S: For certainly, Tisias, men wiser than we say that a man of intelligence must not concern himself with gratifying fellow slaves, except in a secondary way, but rather with gratifying masters who are good and from good stock.
<i>Meloi</i>	274c3	S: I can report what I heard from our ancestors but only they know the truth of it. If we should discover this ourselves, would any of these mortal speculations concern us?
<i>Amelein/Ameleia</i> (3)		
<i>Ameleian</i>	231b	L: But nonlovers don't blame love as an excuse for their neglect of family matters . . .
<i>Amelon</i>	249d	S: When someone looks upon earthly beauty and is reminded of the true beauty he acquires wings; and when he tries those wings, eager but unable to take flight—like a bird looking upward—and he shows no concern for things below, there are reasons to think him touched with madness.
<i>Ameleian</i>	252a	S: She thinks nothing of losing property through neglect and spurns all habits and refinements by which she beautified herself before. . .
<i>Ameleia(i)</i>	256c	S: But if they adopt a more coarse way of life, one that loves honor and not wisdom, then perhaps drunk or in some other careless hour the couple's two unbridled horses will catch their souls unguarded and lead them forward to the same thing . . .
<i>Ēmelesan</i>	259c	S: . . . some people in those days were so dumbstruck with pleasure that they just sang, actually taking no interest in food or drink, and they died before they knew what happened.

TABLE II: Uses as they occur			
Section	Location	<i>Agein</i> or <i>agein</i> -compound	Other notable words
I. Prologue (227a1-230e5)	227c1	<i>Proagein</i>	
	228c1	<i>Proagein</i>	
	229a7	<i>Proagein</i>	
	229b3	<i>Proagein</i>	
	230a7	<i>Agein</i>	
	230b2	<i>katagōgē</i>	
	230c5	<i>Xenagein</i>	
	230c7	<i>Xenagein</i>	
	230d8	<i>Agein</i>	
	230e1	<i>Periagein</i>	
	II. Lysias's Speech (230e6-234c5)		<i>N/A</i>
232a7			<i>Akolonthein</i>
233e2			<i>Akolonthein</i>
III. First Interlude (234c6-237a6)		<i>N/A</i>	
	234d5.i		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	234d5.ii		<i>Hepesthai</i>
IV. Speech of the Concealed Lover (237a1-241d1)	237a7	<i>Agein</i>	
	237d7.i	<i>Agein</i>	
	237d7.ii		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	237d7.iii	<i>Agein</i>	
	237e3	<i>Agein</i>	
	238a		<i>Helkein</i>
	238b2	<i>Agein</i>	
	238c1	<i>Agein</i>	
	238c3	<i>Agōgē</i>	
	239c		<i>Diokein</i>
239c		<i>Diokein</i>	

	239d2		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	240c2	<i>Agein</i>	
	240d2	<i>Agein</i>	
	240d7		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	241b		<i>Diokein</i>
V. Second Interlude (241d2-243e8)		<i>N/A</i>	
VI. Palinode (243e9-257b6)	246a5		<i>Diegēsis</i>
	246b2		<i>Hēniochein</i>
	246b4		<i>Hēniobēsis</i>
	246d6	<i>Agein anō</i>	
	246e4		<i>Hegemon</i>
	246e6		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	247a6		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	247c1	<i>Periagein</i>	
	248a2		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	248a7		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	248c		<i>Epephein</i>
	248e4	<i>Diagein</i>	
	249a8	<i>Diagein</i>	
	250b7		<i>bepesthai</i>
	251b		<i>Diokein</i>
	252e3	<i>Hegemonikos</i>	
	253b1		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	253b7	<i>Agein</i>	
	253c2	<i>Agein</i>	
	253e1		<i>Hēniochein</i>
	254b2	<i>Agein</i>	
	254d		<i>Helkein</i>
	254d		<i>Helkein</i>
	254e7		<i>Hepesthai</i>

	255a1		<i>Hepesthai</i>
	256a8	<i>Agein</i>	
	256b1	<i>Diagein</i>	
	256c3	<i>Sunagein</i>	
	256d1	<i>Diagein</i>	
	256d8	<i>Diagein</i>	
VII. Third Interlude/The Cicadas (257b7-259d9)	259a5	<i>Katagogion</i>	
	259d4	<i>Diagein</i>	
VIII. Knowledge, Truth, Rhetoric (259e1-262c4)	261a2	<i>Paragein</i>	
	261a8	<i>Psuchagogia</i>	
	261e4	<i>Agein</i>	
	262b7	<i>Apagein</i>	
IX. Definition, Collection, Division (262c5-266c1)	262d2	<i>Paragein</i>	
	265d3	<i>Agein</i>	
	266a6	<i>Agein</i>	
	266b4	<i>Sunagogē</i>	
	266b		<i>Diökein</i>
X. Handbooks and Devices (266c1-269c5)	267a3	<i>Agein</i>	
XI. Toward an Art of Speaking (269c6-274b6)	271c10	<i>Psuchagogia</i>	
	271e1		<i>Epakoloutbein</i>
	272d3	<i>Anagein anō</i>	
	273b6	<i>Agein</i>	
XII. The Critique of Writing (274b6-278b6)	276d8	<i>Diagein</i>	
XIII. Epilogue (278b7-279a8)	279a8	<i>Agein</i>	
	279c2	<i>Agein</i>	

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