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THE DIALECTICS OF *EROS*:

From Plato to Dante

By

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy and Literature

University of Warwick, Department of Philosophy

August 2003

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Dedication

For my Father, with my deepest gratitude for your unconditional love and grace.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisor Martin Warner for his support and encouragement. This thesis would not have been possible without his care. Also my sincere thanks to both of my parents for their love and generosity, to my grandmother for her standard of excellence, to Kirsty for her consistent and supportive friendship, and to Donald for his great work ethic. Also special thanks to Veronica Warner, Judy Rawson and Francesca Weinmann for her help with Nardi.

ABSTRACT

Though Dante never read Plato's dialogues on love, when examining the texts of Dante one notes the presence of Platonic thought and influence particularly concerning the notion of love. This thesis will focus upon the Platonic notion of *eros* and how it changes over time, ultimately being integrated into the Christian notion of love as understood by Dante, and how this Platonic influence is instantiated within Dante's poetry.

The inherent ambiguity of the concept of love, evident historically through frequent debates concerning its value whether positive, negative or in-between, makes any investigation into the nature of love problematic, often aporetic. One aim of this thesis is to help overcome some of the *aporiai* of knowledge concerning love through focusing upon one form of love, *eros* or passionate desire, which we shall use in order to understand love more generally through exploring its points of intersection and overlapping with certain other types of love, each of which emphasizes different aspects of love's character differentiated through culture and period.

Significantly *eros*, as perhaps the most ambiguous type of love, is often characterized negatively. Taking into account Nygren's negative view of *eros* which he sees as being wholly acquisitive and self-seeking as opposed to the thoroughly selfless Christian *agape*, we shall consider whether this view tells the full truth about *eros*.

In this endeavour we shall explore the interrelationship of *eros* and understanding understood as a dialectic directed towards the pursuit of truth, which in both the Platonic and Christian traditions involves the permanent possession of the good, beautiful and true; these converge in Neo-Platonic tradition, forming a unity which in Christianity is identified with God. We shall also explore how various strands of *eros* relate to and articulate the notion of love of the individual. These explorations cast light on the transformation of Platonic *eros* by Christian *agape* into the Latin concept of *caritas*.

In terms of procedure, we shall examine the notion of Platonic *eros* as presented in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* and how this conception is reinterpreted in Dante's *Commedia*, these texts together acting as a lens which will enable us better to comprehend the significance of *eros*, and of love more generally, through the transformation of *eros* over time.

Αποροῦμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐξαπροροῦμενοι
(*Απορούμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐξαπροροῦμενοι*)

2 Corinthians 4:8

“Our way is difficult, but we are not at a dead end”¹

¹ D. Emmet translation.

INTRODUCTION

Examination of the texts of Dante reveals what appears to be the presence of Platonic thought and influence particularly clustered around the notion of love. Though Dante had no direct exposure to Plato's dialogues on love,¹ nonetheless the similarity suggests a strong influence. This thesis will focus upon the Platonic notion of *eros* and how it changes over time, ultimately being integrated into the Christian notion of love as understood by Dante, and how this Platonic influence is instantiated within Dante's poetry, with special reference to the *Commedia*.

At the heart of this similarity lies an awareness of a difficulty with regard to any inquiry into the nature of love arising from the ambiguity of the concept. This ambiguity, to a greater or lesser extent neglected in the terms used to designate it, has historically brought into question whether love is a god or a *daimon*, positive or negative, good or bad or in-between; all attempts to explicate the concept or define the terms prove problematic. Such endeavours result in causing the thinker to find himself in a dark pit, an *aporia*, from which he will struggle to climb out. This difficulty gives rise to one of the principal concerns of this thesis, which is to find a *poros* or way, out of the *aporia* of knowledge with regard to love, which we shall show to be articulated through the passage of *eros* from Plato to Dante.

Historically, due to the ambiguity of the concept of love, thinkers have sought ways of dividing the map of the territory into kinds or types of love. Thus the concept appears in diverse configurations, emphasizing different aspects of its character depending upon the culture and period. The single term in English "love" finds at least three forms in Classical Greek, *philia*, *eros* and *agape* (Markus, p. 141). In the Platonic dialogues *eros* means passionate desire or longing and itself is divided into two types, earthly and heavenly *eros*, passionate desire directed towards the physical *versus* passionate desire directed towards the spiritual which is ethically virtuous, beautiful and true. However with the beginning of Christianity, which placed great importance upon *agape* (God ["the Good-in-itself"] is *ἀγάπη*), questions arise as to the relation and

¹ See, for example Moore, "Dante and Plato", First Series, p. 156.

difference between *eros* and *agape*. Nygren sees them as different kinds and opposites, pagan *eros* “the evil” corroding the purity of Christian *agape* (Nygren, pp. 51-4 and 210). Though accurate in some ways, this demonstrates some misunderstanding on the part of Nygren² of the complexity of Platonic *eros* which we shall explore in Part 1. For the medieval mind the distinction between *eros* and *agape* was paralleled by the relation between *amor* and *caritas* as we see in the *Commedia*. In this context *amor* is approximately equivalent to *eros* whereas *caritas* brings together aspects of the Platonic notion of heavenly *eros* and *agape*,³ indicating what appears to be a Platonic leaning in the Christian notion of love. The term *caritas* represents an effort to express the compassionate loving nature of the Christian God, and hence the standard of Christian love; it avoids what has been considered to be the “colourless” neutral quality of the Greek term *agape* (meaning to “be content with”, to “like”), while suggesting/capturing both “the warmth of *phileo*” and the “intensity of *erao*” not present in the word *agape* which refers to the will and therefore action as opposed to emotion. (Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, pp. 133-134) Given that within the overall concept of love, each kind of love though distinct participates and interacts with the others within the whole, through isolating one type of love, *eros*, we shall use it in order to analyze the overlapping and some of the points of intersection in these configurations, a procedure which will give rise to a more complete understanding of love more generally. Given that this is our focus we shall not be examining *agape* in detail as this would demand another thesis.

Our title is *Dialectics of Eros*. *Διαλεκτική* is “the art of debating or arguing” (Liddell and Scott; *διαλεκτικός* means “skilled in discourse or argument”). Dialectics is the “art of investigating the truth of opinions” (*Oxford English Dictionary*) to determine whether the opinions are accurate or not, thereby involving the pursuit of the truth. Thus dialectic should lead towards the truth. As the dialectics which we are going to investigate are the dialectics of *eros*, of passionate desire, we can interpret this title two-fold. First, desire is necessary to motivate the individual in the pursuit of truth as one will only seek what one lacks (*Symposium* 200E8-9). *Eros* and dialectics are for this reason

² See Outka, *Agape*, p. 57 for a critique of *Eros* as self-seeking. Also see critiques by Vlastos (“The Individual as an object of love”, p. 32) and Osborne (p. 55).

³ Nygren, p. 56.

profoundly connected. Second, as dialectics investigate the truth in opinions we shall investigate the truth of opinions about *eros*, of which there are many given its ambiguous nature.

For Plato *eros*, passionate desire, is closely linked with understanding. In the *Symposium* this becomes evident in Socrates' speech in which desire indicates a lack of goodness and beauty but simultaneously is the longing for that goodness or beauty. The full and permanent possession of goodness, beauty and truth is a state of enlightenment and virtue which is the *telos* of all desire. In contrast with the Platonic dialogues in which these three "forms" remain separate though related, in the Neo-Platonic tradition the true, good and beautiful converge in the One, a convergence which in Christianity is identified and is revealed to mankind as God by whom man is redeemed and enlightened. Hence for the Christian, Platonism points towards, finds its questions answered by, and finds its completion in Christianity.

In order to understand Plato's conception of *eros*, we shall first turn to the myth of the birth of *Eros* in Plato's *Symposium* in which we shall find *Eros* to be the child of *Poros* and *Penia*, sharing in the nature of each. However what initially appears simple proves extremely complex and ultimately problematic in that *Poros* has three different and interactive meanings while *Penia*, though relatively consistent, nonetheless has both an intellectual and a physical meaning. Further, the balance of *Poros* and *Penia* respectively in the understanding of *Eros*, and the emphasis placed on different meanings therein, shifts over time. In this context, we shall examine Socrates' relation to *Eros* in the *Symposium*, the relationship of *Eros* to philosophy, and demonstrate how the Socrates of the dialogue personifies philosophical *eros*, further understood through his role as intermediary. To throw light on this we shall explore the relation of *eros* and irony. Initially through the *Symposium* we shall discuss a traditional understanding of irony as well as Socratic irony. This will be followed by an examination of Platonic irony explored in the *Phaedrus* through Plato's use of the recantation and its role in the text. Through this we hope to come closer to the heart of what Plato conceives to be the truest form and expression of love.

In Part 2, we shall see how the Platonic notion of *eros* expressed in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* was transmitted, with modifications, possibly through Ovid

and the Troubadours' tradition of courtly love but also, and more deeply, via Neo-Platonism—from Plotinus' *Enneads* to Augustine's *Confessions* and *de Trinitate*—into medieval culture which nourished Dante's conceptions of *caritas* and *amor* as found in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*.

Turning to the Medieval Christian period, in Part 3 we shall focus upon Dante's *Commedia*. The conflict between courtly love, emerging from pagan roots which seem to be in part of Platonic derivation, and Christianity, which results in the recantation of *amor* in favour of *caritas* as expressed in the poetry of the Troubadours and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, distinguishes two types of love, *amor* and *caritas*, the first of which we shall read as emphasizing a certain understanding of *penia* and the latter of *poros*. Dante articulates these conceptions through Francesca and Beatrice; through interweaving them with pagan myth, whereby Francesca is figured as earthly Venus and Beatrice heavenly Venus, and with sections of the Bible, Francesca is presented as Eve and Beatrice as a Christ-like figure and new Eve. In the latter case given Beatrice's Christ-like role, Christ being the *Logos*, we shall also explore her analogical relation to God, as she is the means by which Dante comes to know God. We shall examine how Dante has reinterpreted the concept of love through renegotiation of what may be illuminatingly interpreted as the different meanings of *poros* and *penia* as articulated through Beatrice and Francesca, and consider what this shows concerning the relationship of *eros* to *caritas* and of Platonism to Christianity.

Through this procedure of inquiry, we shall aim to achieve an understanding of Plato's influence upon Dante, how this occurred and to what extent. Within this context we shall seek a deeper comprehension of the nature of *eros* and its relation to understanding, and of how within the narrow framework of these two authors, who are of course by no means typical of their periods but in different ways set the terms for much subsequent understanding, a specific conception of *eros* has developed through time. In this way we hope better to understand its historical significance which in turn will contribute to an exploration of its value within contemporary life.

PART 1
THE DIALECTICS OF *EROS*
IN THE *SYMPOSIUM* AND THE *PHAEDRUS*

I. *POROS AND APOROS: understanding and subverting the Myth of the Birth of Eros*

Through an examination of the myth of the birth of *Eros*, the relationship of *Eros* to *aporia* unfolds, resulting in a clarification of the Socratic notion of *Eros*, and an explanation of its later interpretations. Beginning with the myth itself, we shall analyze the meaning and the uses of the personifications of *Poros* and *Penia*. Having identified these, we shall examine their relation to the term *aporia* and how the derivatives of *aporia* are used in the myth. Taken together these will mark out both the sequence and stages of *eros* and also bear upon the latter's relation to philosophy.

Turning to the myth, it will be useful to begin by identifying the etymological significance of the figures represented.

When Aphrodite¹ was born, the gods held a celebration. *Poros* [*Πόρος*, Resource], the son of *Metis* [*Μήτιδος: Μητις*, cunning], was there among them. When they had feasted, *Penia* [*Πένια*, Poverty] came begging, as poverty does when there's a party, and stayed by the gates. Now *Poros* got drunk on Nectar (there was no wine yet, you see) and, feeling drowsy, went into the garden of Zeus, where he fell asleep. Then *Penia* schemed up a plan to relieve her lack of resources [*ἀπορίαν, aporian*]: she would get a child from *Poros*. So she lay beside him and got pregnant with Love [*Eros, Ἔρωτα, Ἔρως*]. (203b-c; Dover edition in brackets. Translation Nehamas and Woodruff unless specified.)

A. *Poros*

The term *Poros* is particularly complex in that it has two distinct meanings and is further complexified through its reinterpretation in Neo-Platonism, which has a substantial bearing upon this thesis which examines *Eros* the "child" of *Poros* and its historical transformations. For this reason we must begin by examining the different meanings of *Poros*, and how these meanings interconnect, in order adequately to understand *Eros*.

¹ Aphrodite, rather than the heavenly Aphrodite the earthly Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione, a view supported by Price's (p. 20) analysis of 203e1.

1. *Poros* as Resourcefulness/Cunning

The first meaning of *Poros*, which has more of an intellectual emphasis, is “a way or means of achieving, accomplishing, discovering,” “a means of providing” (Plato, *Meno* 78d), and “a contrivance, device, resource” (Liddell and Scott, p. 1256).² *Poros* involves a type of intellectual cleverness and resourcefulness which is “never at a loss, never without expedients (*poroi*) to get himself out of any kind of trouble (*aporia*)”.³ This intellectual cleverness is entirely different from “the contemplating of immutable essences”⁴ as it involves dexterity with regard to the manipulation of “shifting, multiple and unpredictable entities of Becoming” and is therefore applied to particular concrete situations in order to overcome individual *aporiai*.

This conception is articulated through *Poros*' parentage, his mother being *Metis* or Cunning.⁵ Zeus swallowed *Metis*, his first wife and the mother of Athena, to ensure his sovereignty (Hesiod, *Theogony* 887-901, 925-30), given that she was foreseen to give birth to a son of great wisdom who would rule over the gods and men, an act through which Zeus opposed destiny/fate. As she was wisest of the gods, Zeus put her “inside his own belly” so that “this goddess should think for him, for good and for evil” (*Theogony* 901, Trans. Lattimore), giving him “the resourceful cleverness which enables [him] to get out of inextricable situations” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 112). In her struggle against Zeus which she ultimately lost, *Metis*' ingenuity, contrivance and cunning were demonstrated in that she metamorphized herself into different forms beneath his fingers, to camouflage herself and thereby trick him. This shows *Metis*'

kinship with the divided, shifting world of multiplicity in the midst of which it operates. It is this way of conniving with reality which ensures its efficacy. Its suppleness and malleability give it the victory in domains where there are no ready-made rules for success, no established methods, but where each new trial

² Strangely, among the references to the various uses of *Poros* in Liddell and Scott, Plato's *Symposium* is not mentioned.

³ Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 18; compare Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 144.

⁵ “The idea of Wisdom (*Mētis*) also played a part, as a personified being, in the speculations of the theogonists. For it seems, at least, probable that the Orphic theologians had already in Plato's time evolved the equation *Phanes*=*Ericapaeus*=*Metis*, and that here as elsewhere in the language of Diotima there lie allusions to the doctrines of that school of mystics.”(Bury, xli) “*Mētis* was also an Orphic *alias* of *Eros*”. (Bury, pp. 100-1)

demands the invention of new ploys, the discovery of a way out (*Poros*) that is hidden. (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 21)

Hence *Metis* and consequently her son *Poros* demonstrated the ability to think up new schemes or ways out of problems, difficulties, lack of ways hence *aporiai*.

This understanding of *Poros* as possessing “cunning” seems to be present in one of Alcman’s poems, the *Partheneion* (*Louvre Partheneion*. Frag. I), one of the earliest examples of Greek poetry (c. 700 BC) in which *Aisa* and *Poros* seems to be personified as primordial deities described as “the most honoured (eldest) of the gods” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 127). Page (*Alcman, The Partheneion*, pp. 35-6) suggests that *Aisa* and *Poros* have related meanings in that each personifies the idea of “*Allotment*, powers of predestination”. Supporting this reading, Kirk, Raven and Schofield (p. 49) view the context as “requiring man’s destiny or portion as the general sense of both *Aisa* and *Poros*”. Page’s position is given at best partial support by Bowra (p. 26) who accepts that “*Poros* is closely related to *Aisa*” while arguing that *Poros* seems “to stand for initiative as opposed to destiny”. He (p. 41) maintains that as Alcman elsewhere makes *Poros* “a shaping power in his cosmology, and evidently means it to signify ‘Device’ in the sense of the intelligence which shapes situations”, so in Fragment 1 he does something similar. Therefore for him “when *Aisa* and *Poros* are combined, it means that what has to be happens, but the means by which it happens is the wits of men” (p. 41).

This meaning of *Poros* is also suggested with regard to Fragment 1 by Campbell (p. 363) who translates *Poros* as “the contriver” referring also to Fragment 5, 2, col. iii and of *Aisa* as fate, forming the pair “fate and the contriver”.⁶ According to Fraenkel’s reading of the *Partheneion*⁷, *Poros* stands in opposition to *Aisa*, the principle of Destiny which involves “inescapable compulsion” which is absolute constraint, versus *Poros* which is “relative freedom”, “remedy” (Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p.

⁶ Detienne and Vernant compare this to Parvese who discusses this relation by indicating that “*Poros* is associated with *Aisa* as the ‘way’ of ‘destiny’. To say that ‘Destiny’ and ‘Way’ are the most ancient of the gods is to recognise that Destiny is always *porimos*, that it always finds a way and means to be fulfilled”. (*Cunning Intelligence*, p. 166)

⁷ Fraenkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie* 1962, pp. 183-184 referred to and supported by Detienne and Vernant in *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 127.

163),⁸ “the expression of that element of initiative which the future leaves to an intelligence which is capable of making the most of every opportunity”, implying cunning intelligence, a position embraced by Detienne and Vernant (*Cunning Intelligence*, pp. 166-7; also see Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 163) and a meaning apparent in Plato’s myth.⁹

2. *Poros* as Pathway

The second and perhaps earlier¹⁰ meaning of *Poros*, which is connected to the first and which can be either concrete or intellectual, is a path or way through an *aporia* or lack of way. Liddell and Scott (p. 1256) first define *πόρος* [*poros*] as a means of “passing a river, a ford or ferry” (Herodotus 4:140, and Aesc. *Pers.* 864), “a narrow part of the sea, a strait” (Hes. *Th.* 292, Aesch. *Pr.* 531, and Hdt. 7. 183), “the paths of the sea” (Aesch. *Pers.* 453 and Soph. *Aj.* 412) and often rivers, “an artificial passage over a river, a bridge” (Hdt. 4.136), “a general pathway, or way” (Aesch. *Ag.* 910), or “a passage through the skin or passages by which the ἀπορροαί passed” a use which significantly is found in Plato’s *Meno* 76c. (Also see Penwill, pp. 15-20.)

This kind of *poros* is exemplified through a commentary based upon what seems to be a cosmological poem by Alcman cited above (*Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 2390 Fr: 3 col.

⁸ Fraenkel ((Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, pp. 163-4) makes a convincing case that this is the conception of *Poros* which Alcman intends through his analysis of the subsequent lines of Frag. 1. *Aisa* is expressed several lines later when Alcman writes, “Let no man’s striving spirit soar up to the heaven or seek to wed Aphrodite” or a “child of the sea-god”. Here according to Fraenkel, “*Aisa* establishes our human limitations firmly and places us far below the gods”. Then by writing, “the graces with lovely eyelashes come to the house of Zeus”, Alcman shows that “*charis* (‘charm, amiability, complaisance, grace’) lead men to the throne of gods” as opposed to violence or being a “presumptuous claimant”. Hence as West (“Alcman and Pythagoras”, p. 9) writes, “the lyre is mightier than the sword” and gains entry. So, “even if *Aisa*, destiny, separates man and god forever, *Poros*, the possession and graceful use of good gifts, builds a bridge over the abyss” (Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 164), which points us to our second meaning of *Poros*.

Furthermore, if seen in this way, “when *Aisa* and *Poros* are called most worthy of honour (or eldest) of the gods, the implication is that absolute compulsion and relative freedom are the basic principles of the world” (Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 163), which points towards Fraenkel’s understanding of *Poros* and *Tekmor* in Frag. 5 and which supports his understanding of Fragment 5 as a cosmology.

⁹ “By Plato’s time the meaning ‘device’ had become common, and it is of this that *Poros* is a hypostasis. One can see the ghost of Plato’s *Poros* lurking behind the common interpretation of Alcman’s as ‘Device’”. (Penwill, p. 33, note 30)

¹⁰ “The use of *Poros* as ‘Device’ is not particularly common in the fifth century. The earliest uses of *Poros* are all concrete—as a ford or paths in the sea.” (Penwill, pp. 15-20)

ii, 7-20; in Cambell, Frag 5).¹¹ In this commentary, the writer personifies *Poros*, bringing together physical and psychological processes with myth.¹² In the cosmogony, the world was originally in a state of formlessness and lack, ὕλη, where “nothing was distinguishable”, after which *Thetis* began a craftsman-like, smith-like activity “putting ὕλη in order” (Bowra, p. 26).¹³ While for West Alcman’s choice of *Thetis*, a sea-

¹¹ The commentator on Alcman writes, “In this ode Alcman speculates upon nature” (Frag. 5, col. I, 26; in Cambell, Frag. 5). Given that Alcman’s original text has not been preserved with the exception of lemmata, it is debatable to what extent Frag. 5 represents the thought of Alcman. This is first apparent in that the scholia show an Aristotelian influence, assimilating “Alcman to Aristotle’s discussion of four ‘causes’...in Physics B.” (Kirk, Raven, Schofield, p. 48; also see West in “Alcman and Pythagoras”, p. 4 and Penwill, pp. 15-20) Secondly both Page (“Oxyrhynchus”, pp. 20-21) and Penwill (pp. 13-14) note that in Frag. 5 the commentator is mistaken in associating *Skotos* with *Poros* and *Tekmor* instead of connecting it with moonlight and daylight as suggested in the following lemma. However West (p. 154), Fraenkel (pp. 253-4), Kirk, Raven and Schofield (pp. 47-9) and Penwill (pp. 14-20) all believe the poem to be a cosmogony. Penwill believes that given the unusual and obscure details concerning the natural world, geography and biology in his poetry in general it is not surprising that Alcman produces a cosmology which “displays a highly individual character both in terminology and in the motif it employs”, as demonstrated in Frag. 20 where he describes the creation of the seasons (Penwill, p. 14).

Page states that this is a particular interpretation “put upon Alcman’s words” which do not necessarily express his opinions which may have been different. The scholium does indicate however that he “spoke of *Thetis*, *Poros* and *Tekmor* (how far he personified these two, we do not know) in relation to the differentiation of the world-stuff. That it seems to me is almost all we can learn about Alcman’s discourse” (Page, “Oxyrhynchus”, p. 21). This suggests that it is less clear whether Alcman’s original poem was a cosmogony. However in the *scholium* of Frag. 1 the commentator has “identified *Poros* with the god called Chaos by Hesiod in his mythologizing [*Theogony* 116. 123]” (Cambell, p. 371), an identity affirmed by Penwill. Kirk, Raven and Schofield (p. 49) disagree with the commentator on Fragment 1 in his identification of *Poros* with Hesiod’s *Chaos*. They think it not improbable that “the link with Hesiod’s *Chaos* is derived by the Parthenion-commentator from our cosmological fragment”. West (“Alcman and Pythagoras”, pp. 4-5) supports this position stating that the connection between Hesiod’s *Chaos* and Alcman’s *Poros* may lie in that both represent the “first movement towards the world’s creation”. If this influence upon the Parthenion-commentator was actual, either he read this fragment or the original poem understood as cosmological, or one of the other commentaries then in existence (col. i, 27f.). Furthermore as Kirk, Raven and Schofield (p. 49) mention, the reference to Hesiod’s *Chaos* may show Alcman’s “awareness of the Hesiodic account”. In short regardless of the commentator’s misreading and imposition of later ideas it does seem that Alcman did speculate on nature. (See Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 253, note 2.)

¹² “In the relics of the early Greek cosmologies Alcman’s stands independent and alone. It has a mythical side, but it also tries to relate myth to physical and mental processes. In his conception of an original ὕλη he is not far from Hesiod’s *Chaos*, but when he sets *Thetis* to work he seems almost to anticipate Thales, who made water the ἀρχή of everything. His introduction of πόρος is confirmed by another passage in his poetry, where Πόρος is closely related to Αἴσα and seems to stand for initiative as opposed to destiny. Finally, τέκμων takes the place of τέλος in the later philosophers. The combination of Πόρος and Αἴσα secures the result that light and darkness exist...His account of the creation is more than mythological and anticipates some of the methods of the first Greek physicists, and incidentally shows how much these owed to the speculations of poets. In Alcman we see the first rays of the Ionian Enlightenment, and watch how he moves forward from Hesiod to something more abstract and more scientific.” (Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, p. 26)

¹³ “As the bronze-worker to unworked bronze, so was *Thetis* to the undifferentiated matter” (Page, “Oxyrhynchus”, p. 20). This cosmogony “differs from Hesiod in that rather than using the analogy of biological reproduction he uses the analogy of the divine demiurge as craftsman” (Penwill, p. 13).

goddess, indicates that the ὕλη refers to primeval waters and that the poem is a water-cosmogony,¹⁴ for Campbell (p. 393) *Thetis* is not a sea goddess but “creation”, her name being derived from the verb “to place or set in place”.¹⁵

She is accompanied by the principles¹⁶ *Poros* (Path or beginning, origin) and *Tekmor* (Guide-mark, *telos*)¹⁷ which she seems to evoke (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 150; also p. 310) and which may be “properly aspects of the activity of *Thetis*—the beginning and the end of her demiurgy” (Page, “Oxyrhynchus”, p. 20)—which bring the formless void “into shape”.¹⁸ While Fraenkel sees a Genesis-like creation,¹⁹ Detienne and Vernant describe how this activity opens up a path for the sun, enabling light to come into and overcome the dark night of the world through the sun, moon and stars (*Cunning Intelligence*, p. 140).²⁰ This opening of a path, with *Poros* as both “beginning” and “way”, indicates that *Poros* is “the way of contriving things

¹⁴ West (“Alcman and Pythagoras”, p. 2) assumes that given Alcman’s date, the single formless element referred to is water indicating that this is a water cosmology. West sees this as “confirmed by the use of *απορος* and by the presence of *Thetis*, the sea-goddess as demiurge”. However, Penwill rejects West’s view which supports early readings of *Poros* as a waterway and means of crossing. (Penwill, p. 20)

¹⁵ *Thetis* means “to place or set in place” as efficient cause or craftsman. (Kirk, Raven and Schofield, p. 48) However for West, “she was not only chosen because her name refers to the verb indicating her to be “an organizer of undefined matter”. (West, “Alcman and Pythagoras”, p. 3; also see his “Three Presocratic Cosmologies”, p. 155)

¹⁶ “Now Alcman’s *Tekmor* is neither a concrete and visible sign such as a moon, nor a criterion available to men. It is a hypostasis for these things, it exists independently of them; and if we wish to clarify it, we shall have to say that it represents a principle or a potentiality rather than a specific event.” (West, “Three Presocratic Cosmologies”, p. 156)

¹⁷ Campbell (Frag. 5) and West (“Three Presocratic Cosmologies”, p. 155) translate them as the “beginning”, “origin” or “ground” and the “end” or “*telos*”. Fraenkel thinks *Poros* and *Tekmor* (for him a variant of *Moirai/Aisa*) represent “open possibility and binding establishment” (Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 164). Yet “for *Poros* and *Tekmor* we must hesitate between more concrete and more abstract meanings, with a natural inclination to the former: between physical path or track, and the way or means of passage or progress; and between visible signs, mark or limit, and end or culmination (both of these being Homeric)” (Kirk, Raven and Schofield, p. 48). Interestingly, Penwill believes *Tekmor* from the “*Moirai-Aisa* group...is a force primarily responsible for cosmic order” and “fills the role of demiurge”.

¹⁸ West, “Alcman and Pythagoras”, p. 2. “If the world-mass was ἀπορον και ἀτεκμαρτον, trackless and featureless, affording neither passage nor orientation, then *Poros* and *Tekmor* were the beings immediately needed to bring it into shape.” (also see Bowra, p. 40)

¹⁹ This activity results in “the ordering of the world as it comes into being in the sense that the two together separate ‘day’ from ‘darkness’ by creating a separate existence for (sun and) moon, and by establishing their orbits, phases and seasons upon which all earthly existence depends.” (Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 164; also see West, “Three Presocratic Cosmologies”, p. 156)

²⁰ “Into the darkness (*skotos*) of the sky and waters which were originally indistinguishable, [*Poros*] introduces differentiated paths which make it possible to discern upon the vault of heaven and the sea the various directions of space which provide orientation in an expanse originally pathless and without any point of reference.” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 148)

[which] sets them going” causing differentiation (Bowra, p. 26; also see Lobel, p. 55 and West, “Alcman and Pythagoras”, p. 2-4, Page, “Oxyrhynchus”, p. 20), while *Tekmor* means “to bring things to their final shape, the desired limit in each case” (Page, “Oxyrhynchus”, p. 20). *Poros* is therefore a strategy to escape the *aporia* of lack of way in an intellectual sense, while in a physical sense it means passage, pathway or ford out of the ὕλη.²¹ Assisted by *Tekmor*²², *Poros* represents “the transition from a chaotic expanse of sea to a space which was defined and ordered,” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 152) the plotting of a path or *poros* over the *pontos* or “great unknown open sea”²³ which resembles Tartarus and Hesiod’s *Chaos*. It, therefore, defines “the activity of an intelligence entirely directed towards escaping from the *aporia* of a world dominated by confusion” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 289).

3. Prior uses of *Poros*

There remains some disagreement as to the source of the personification of *Poros* and his relation to *Metis* and *Eros*. For Dover (*Symposium*, 141), there is no reason to think that Plato’s myth came from “earlier writers; the construction of relationships between forces of personified divinities is a common Greek way of characterizing those forces (cf. 197d7n.)”. However Bury (*Symposium* xli, 100) notes the probable influence

²¹ “*Poros*, a word which also belongs to the semantic family of *perao*, to cross, means the stratagem or expedient invented by *metis* so as to open up a path.” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 289; see also p. 150)

²² *Tekmor* means “a distinctive mark, an indication or sign” related to *Poros* as it has the “same psychological implications; it is synonymous with *mechos*, plan, remedy for a difficult situation” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 150). According to Bowra, “τέκμωρ means the ‘boundary’ or ‘end’” (Bowra, p. 26; also see Page, *Alcman, The Partheneion*, p. 35) but “means not only the goal aimed at but also the plan or remedy to cope with a difficult situation...It is a concept which relates to the intersection of three separate but complementary domains, namely navigation, astronomy and divination”. *Tekmor* means the point aimed at on the horizon, the position of the stars, and which also involves navigation by the stars trusting in the signs from the gods revealed by diviners who recognise “signals and choosing guide-marks in such a way as to construct a bridge between the visible and the invisible” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, pp. 288-9).

²³ “*Pontos*, which is described as *apeiron*, no doubt because it is impossible to cross it from one side to the other, has its counterpart in *Poros*, known as a cosmological power ever since the age of Alcman. The original sense of *Poros* was a ford, a passage through a stretch of water, and it thus came to mean the route or path that the navigator has to open up through the *pontos* and across the sea.” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 222) “*Poros* represents paths in the primeval sea, *Tekmor* signs of direction through it.” (West in Kirk, Raven and Schofield, p. 48)

of Orphic theologians as well as the use of personifications of *Poros* and *Penia* which are later used in Aristophanes' *Plutus*.

With regard to *Poros*, in Alcman's *Parthenion* (Frag. 1, 13-15), *Poros* (associated with *Metis*/Cunning) and *Aisa* (Destiny) are personified and called *geraitatoi*. Page (*Alcman, The Partheneion*, p. 36) believes "No other personification of *Poros* is recorded and no other Hellene called *Aisa* and *Poros* 'eldest of the gods'". With regard to the relation of *Poros* and *Eros*, "there is no reason to believe that the genealogy existed before Plato, who indeed has probably invented it for his own purpose". Though Inge (p. 140, note 1) believes that "Greek mythology had no authoritative doctrine about the parentage of *Eros*", Hesiod (*Theogony*, 120-1), who does not refer to *Poros*, describes *Eros* as having come into existence just after *Chaos* with *Gaia* and *Tartaros*. Later, following the birth of Aphrodite, *Eros* accompanies her (*Theogony*, 202). In contrast, in *Symposium* 203b3 Diotima characterizes *Eros* as "begotten on the birthday of Aphrodite", a point which Plotinus extends to mean that he is the child of Aphrodite, though at *Symposium* 178 Phaedrus reports Parmenides' view that *Eros* is the oldest of the gods.²⁴

Though Hesiod treats *Metis*/Cunning as a goddess (*Theog.*, 887 and 900), he does not associate her directly with the gods, *Eros* and *Poros*. Fragments 12-13 of Parmenides suggest "that it was not Plato who invented the relationship between *Metis* and *Eros*" (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 146): "She devised (*metisato*) *Eros* first of all the gods" (Frag. 13).²⁵ Hence in Parmenides, the female *daimon* steering all things like *Metis* created "as the first of all gods *Eros*, the cosmic power of love and procreation" (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 310). "The verb *metiomai* implies a kind of creation but one which involves not so much giving birth as a goddess as a mental operation carried out by the intelligence typical of a knowing *daimon* who steers the world, plotting out its route in advance, just as a pilot guides a ship over the sea" (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 146). Hence in Parmenides' myth we have a *Metis*-like figure creating *Eros*.²⁶

²⁴ "Eros has no fixed parentage in early legend." (Page, *Alcman, The Partheneion*, p. 36, note 2)

²⁵ Barker 2003 translation. Also see Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 257.

²⁶ "In Acousilaos, by contrast, *Nux* and *Erebus* give birth to a shining *Metis* who is associated with *Aither* and *Eros*." (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 157)

4. A Third Use of *Poros*: Wealth/Plenty/Possession in Plotinus

A third use of *poros* is due to reinterpretation or misinterpretation of the original concepts of *poros* as involving cunning to resolve an *aporia*, or as a pathway; this is *poros* as wealth, resource or possession. In order to understand this later interpretation of *poros*, which emerges fully in Plotinian thought thereby informing the Christian tradition, we must turn back to the earlier uses of *poros*. The possibility of this conception, perhaps even a strand of this interpretation of *poros* as wealth, is present in the earlier Greek conception of *poros*. An example of this may be found in the *Argonautica*. When storm causes *pontos* to return to an *aporos* state, the Argonauts are saved by Apollo shining a light which “is likened to the world suddenly emerging into light out of the primordial night,*Metis-Phanes* who by moving her wings,...by setting the winds and stars in motion, disperses the ‘shadowy darkness’ and thus brings in the ‘brilliant light’” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 156). Thus it is through the god’s action that the *poros* or pathway through the *aporia* is opened. Similarly in the *Odyssey*, “Just as the pilot makes the agonizing discovery that he has reached a part of the *pontos* that cannot be crossed Athena comes and opens a route for him, indicating a *poros* which is both a solution and a way out of the *aporia* into which the sea may plunge sailors and navigators” (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 222). Thus again it is the goddess who through her resourcefulness, cunning and contrivance creates the *poros*, “the solution” as in the first definition and the way out or pathway out of the *aporia* as in the second. Taken one step further, this can be understood as a wealth or resource from heaven supplying the lack of the earth which ultimately leads to the Plotinian opposition of *Poros* and *Penia* as resource, wealth or possession versus the lack or poverty of matter.

A further potential source, not only of the Platonic opposition of *Poros* and *Penia* but also of subsequent readings of *poros* as possession or wealth, may be found in the *Plutus* which probably dates from several years before the *Symposium*. Aristophanes personifies both poverty and wealth, so the more “usual antonym of *penia* is *πλοῦτος* (*ploutos*) ‘wealth’” (Dover, p. 141). This opposition of Plenty and Poverty is passed down to Plutarch, in *De Iside et Osiride*, ch. 57, 374D-E which is an interpretation of

Plato's myth. Plutarch's work represents the parents of *Eros* to be Plenty and Poverty, *Poros* which he equates with "Form" (MacKenna, *Enneads*, p. 180, note 67) or "intelligible reality" (Armstrong, *Enneads*, pp. 182-3, note 3), and *Penia* with "Matter".²⁷

However this new leaning in the term *poros* takes its full form in the work of Plotinus. Plotinus develops an elaborate interpretation of Diotima's allegory in which "Zeus is *νοῦς* (*nous*), Aphrodite is *ψυχή*, (*psuche*), *Poros* is *λόγος* (*logos*), *Penia* is *ὕλη* (*hule*); and much more to the same effect" (Stewart, *The Myths of Plato*, p. 428).²⁸ Plotinus reads *Poros* as the Reason-Principle of all that is from the Intellect, which upon the birth of beauty overflows, and lies drunk with beauty within Zeus' garden. "These Reason-Principles—this *Poros* who is the lavishness, the abundance of Beauty—are at one and are made manifest; this is the Nectar-drunkenness." (MacKenna, *Ennead* III. 5, 9) Like Plutarch, Plotinus interprets the myth as the "intelligible nature" having intercourse with matter, a sufficient, definite rational principle merging with an irrational "indefinite impulse" (Armstrong, *Ennead*), and "indeterminate striving" (MacKenna, *Ennead*), producing *Eros* which, due to its "material" element²⁹ or *penia*, remains incomplete, insufficient (Armstrong, *Enneads*, III, 5, 7). In contrast to the first conception of *Poros* as involving intellectual cleverness and cunning, Plotinus modifies the meaning of *Poros* which is now seen as the fullness resulting from the descending Reason-Principle from the One into the Soul, eventually resulting in the "contemplation of immutable essences". At the beginning of III,5,8 MacKenna translates *Poros* as wealth. "*Poros*, Wealth, is the Reason-Principle of the Universe", while at the start of the next section, "This *Poros*, Possession...[is] the Reason-Principle of all that exists in the Intellectual Realm and in the supreme Intellect", implying possession of the good and beautiful.³⁰ Similarly Armstrong translates *Poros* as "Plenty".³¹ *Poros* is interpreted as

²⁷ These "unite to form the universe, and [he] assimilates the three to the Egyptian triad Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Plotinus, though rejecting the identification of Love with the universe [see III, 5, 5], retains something from this older allegorical interpretation of his parents." (*Enneads*, pp. 182-3, note 3)

²⁸ "Plotinus identifies Aphrodite with 'the soul', or more definitely with 'the soul of Zeus' (Zeus himself being *ὁ νοῦς*), but it seems clear from Plato's language that she is rather the personification of beauty (*Ἀφροδίτης καλῆς οὐσίας* 203c)." (Bury, xlii)

²⁹ "The idea that the soul's Love has a radical incompleteness, a permanent incapacity to be satisfied, because of the 'material' element in it, goes rather beyond anything else in the *Enneads*." (Armstrong, *Enneads*, p. 190, note 1)

³⁰ Plotinus' reading of *Poros* in the myth seems to have been derived in part from his reading of *Symposium* 204A and B. He writes *Eros* "is not entirely destitute; the deficient seeks more of what it has, and certainly

being full of “reason-principles” flowing down from the Good, and therefore satisfied, sufficient,³² yet simultaneously overflowing in “reason-principles” and hence goodness; this Christian Neo-Platonists later reinterpreted as the expression of a non-acquisitive form of love, which was hardly part of the initial use of *Poros* as the child of *Metis*, Cunning.³³ All of these translations indicate, rather than cunning which implies a worldly wisdom, an abundance, due to the downpouring of the Intellect from the One or the Good, of form, beauty, reason, goodness, etc. so that to acquire this type of wisdom involves a turning upwards in contemplation of the good, from which one receives a “wealth” of goodness, rather than a turning downwards to the world implicit in *poros* as cunning, by which one’s ends are achieved.

Plotinus’ view, furthermore, seems to be connected to, and to some extent a reinterpretation of, the second meaning of *poros*, pathway. This seems to be the case in that the contemplation of this wealth of “reason-principles”, and the tracing and following of them back to their source, act as a *poros* or way through which the individual soul is freed from the *aporia* of the world, resulting in the freeing and/or salvation of the soul (depending upon the interpretative tradition). Thus in Plotinus’

nothing absolutely void of good would ever go seeking the Good” (MacKenna, III, 5, 9). In Ennead I. 6, 2 “On Beauty”, the “Reason Principles” impress form upon matter making it beautiful. Likewise, in Ennead III. 5, 9, the “Reason Principles” impress form upon matter making it good (MacKenna, p. 186, note 81). *Eros* being a desire for the good (MacKenna, III, 5, 9), and being midway between good and evil, beauty and ugliness, seeks goodness and beauty as something which it already in part possesses and feels a kinship with (III. 5, 1). For this reason Plotinus in his reading of the myth sees *poros* as indicating a possession of beauty and goodness, and *eros* as having a partial possession, the fulfilment of which it pursues. For a similar later reading see Ficino *On Love*, Speech VI, 7, p. 117.

³¹ “The rational principles all together are Plenty, the plenitude and wealth of beauties, already manifested; and this is the being drunk with nectar.” (Armstrong, *Enneads*, III, 5, 9)

³² “Soul which is with Intellect and has come into existence from Intellect, and then again been filled with rational principles and, itself beautiful, adorned with beauties and filled with plenitude, so that there are in it many glories and images of all beautiful things, is as a whole Aphrodite, and the rational principles in it are all plenitude and Plenty, as the nectar there flows from the regions above; and the glories in it, since they are set in life, are called the ‘garden of Zeus’, and it is said that Plenty ‘sleeps’ there, ‘weighed down’ by the principles with which he was filled.” (Armstrong, *Enneads*, III, 5, 9)

³³ An unselfish component in *eros* however is articulated in the *Symposium* by Diotima as a “bringing forth upon the beautiful in body and soul” (Jowett), or “giving birth in beauty” *τόκος ἐν καλῷ*, (*tokos en kaloi*) (206b7-8), a view which may be in later readings to some degree conflated with *poros*. For Plotinus, “the One is *Eros*” (*Ennead* 6. 8, 15), by which he understands the Good loves itself working out the dynamics of a love relationship within and for itself, though it has no need (Rist, *Platonism and its Christian Heritage*, p. 86, Wallis, 64) as it is “*Eros* to Himself” (Nygren, pp. 198-99). The One does not care for or need what it creates (V, 5, 12.40-9; Wallis, p. 64, a point which Nygren (p. 195) disagrees with), nor does it try to create, the outpouring being the effortless emanation from itself as light from the sun, and the overflowing of other hypostases being the effortless consequence of contemplation of the One. As we shall later see when distinguishing *eros* from *agape*, *eros* ultimately degrades on some level as it is focused upon the self.

interpretation of the myth of the birth of *Eros* articulating this process, *Poros* is the embodiment of resource, *Penia*'s beloved, and the object of her seduction as he represents the passage by which resource can be achieved, the passage by which *Penia*'s lack, lack of passage, or *aporia*, can be overcome; in this way *Poros* represents a way or means of achieving or providing because he possesses resource. He, for *Penia*, represents her resource.

Although this third use of *poros* is at best only implicit in Plato, it represents an understanding of the term which was often later accepted, as we see with Neo-Platonist readers such as Ambrose and Ficino. Ambrose confusingly and dubiously combines Plotinus' reading of Plato's myth of *Eros* with the Song of Songs which, following Novotny's reading, seems to connect *Poros*' fullness due to the "Reason-Principles" coming down from the One with the Logos of God.³⁴ Ficino's view is yet more Neo-Platonic, *Poros* being the descending "ray of God"³⁵ so that one "receives from Him the divine ray, which is Porus, or plenty. In this ray, as though in a kind of seed, the Reasons of all things are contained" (Ficino, Speech VI, 7, p. 116).³⁶ The common component in these Plotinian readings of *Poros* is the interpretation of *Poros* as the outpouring/overflowing of God on what is below, hence man, so that *Poros* is seen as

³⁴ Ambrose interprets Plato in terms of the Scriptures which he assumes were known to him. See *De bono mortis* 5, 18-21 "where he combines 'the enclosed garden' of the bride in the Song of Songs (4,12) with the 'garden of Zeus' from Plato's *Symposium* (203B)...According to Ambrose's commentary Plato took this image from that garden in which the bride of the Scripture meets her celestial bridegroom. It is said that he called Zeus' garden (*Iovis hortum*) elsewhere 'the garden of the mind' (*hortus mentis*), because he applied the name of Zeus (*Jupiter*) both to God and to the mind of the universe. Into this garden entered the soul, which he calls Aphrodite (*Venus*)—with Plato this is actually *Penia*, Poverty, and the event takes place on the birthday of Aphrodite—so that she may fill herself with the riches and abundance of the garden, wherein the drunk *Poros* (*Porus*) was lying, pouring forth nectar. The soul faithful to god, entered the garden, wherein there was an abundance of various virtues and flowers of speech. Since in the paradise of Genesis there was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and other trees, Plato arrived at the idea that he must transfer this abundance of virtues thence and plant it in the garden of the mind, which Salomon called in the Song of Songs also the garden of the soul (*hortum animae*) or the soul itself. How much more beautiful this is, that the soul adorned with flowers of virtue should be a garden, that the soul may be watered by the heavenly rain of the Word and by its abundance... may bear fruit. The Word of God then feasts on the virtues of the soul.... Hence then were taken those Platonic feasters, hence that nectar from prophetic wine and honey, hence sleep, hence that eternal life, which, as he (Plato) says, his Gods enjoy, for Christ is life." (Novotny, p. 198)

³⁵ "When that *Poros*, that is, the ray of God, descends, once united with *Penia*, that is, the previous poverty of this [lack of light present in the angelic mind], he creates love." (Ficino, Speech VI, 7, p. 116)

³⁶ Ficino understands "drunk with nectar" to mean that "he overflows with the dew of the divine vitality" (Ficino, Speech VI, 7, p. 116). Also see Ficino, Speech VI, 10 (p. 126): "Certainly this great reward of Love derives from his father, Plenty, since the ray of beauty which is both Plenty and the father of love, has the power to be reflected back to where it came from, and it draws the lover with it."

being of divine origin, a fullness or wealth of creative goodness which in the Neo-Platonist Christian context has a selfless aspect and which ultimately, in conjunction with *Penia* or lack, will lead man back to God. The Neo-Platonist conception of *Poros*, having been integrated into the Christian tradition, informed later notions of *Eros* including that of Dante as we shall later see. Thus Plotinus' reading of *Poros* marked what seems a point of departure from Platonic thought in that Plotinus, while believing himself to be strictly following Plato, used this Platonic myth and myth in general to suit his own ends, a point noted by Armstrong (*Enneads*, p. 176, note 1). Thus after Plotinus *Poros*, and therefore *Eros*, has an enriched meaning which we shall consider in the latter part of this thesis.

B. *Penia*

Turning now to the other parent of *Eros* in the myth, *Penia* personifies Poverty or Lack, as it does in Aristophanes' *Plutus* 388 B.C. written shortly before.³⁷ This personification is developed in that *Penia* comes begging at the door of the party, as traditionally "beggars come to the door when festivities are in progress, hoping to profit by the tipsy euphoria of the guests" (Dover, *Symposium*, p. 142).

Penia is closely related to *aporos*; it signifies lack of resource or poverty. Ἄπορος (*aporos*; adj.), in Liddell and Scott (p. 195), means "without passage, having no way in, out, or through". On a physical level it means "impassable, pathless, trackless" (*Tim.* 25d, *Crit.* 108e). In the second usage it describes a state or circumstance which is "hard to see one's way through, impracticable, very difficult," "hard to get, scarce", and the third refers to people who are "hard to deal with, troublesome, unmanageable" (Plato, *Apol.* 18d, but also in Euripides' *Bacch.* 800); also "without means or resources, helpless" and "poor and needy" (*Republic* 552a). Ἀπορέω (*aporeo*) means to be Ἄπορος (*aporos*), be "without means or resource" "to be at a loss, be in doubt, be puzzled" (Plato's *Prot.* 321c, 326e, 348c, *Polit.* 262e, *Lysias* 115.2, *Phaedo* 84c, *Gorg.* 462b, *Alcib.* 2. 142d). In dialectic it means "to start a question, raise a difficulty or puzzle" or to be faced by the

³⁷ This view is supported by Dover (*Symposium*, p. 142).

difficulty (Plato, *Soph.* 243b). It also means “to be left wanting, left unprovided for”, as is *penia*. The second type of use for ἀπορέω is “to be at a loss for, in want of” at which point we have our first reference to the *Symposium* 193e. Skipping to the fourth use, ἀπορέω means “to be in want, be poor” as in Plato’s *Symposium* 203e.

Derivatives of the word ἀπορία (*aporia*) are used three times in 203-4. The first use is on line 203b8, ἀπορίαν which Nehamas correctly translates as *Penia*’s “lack of resource”, Jowett translating it as “penury”. When Plato writes “*Penia* schemed”, she seems to take on the character of *Poros*, and therefore seems to show that she is not without resource, πόρος, herself, to “relieve herself of her lack of resource”, to overcome her ἀπορία.³⁸ This however as Bury points out may well be misleading. Siding with Zeller and Stallbaum, he considers that this part of the story is present for “literary effect” (*Symposium*, xli); Detienne and Vernant (*Cunning Intelligence*, p. 144) suggest that “Plato is poking fun”. Since these are actual personifications of terms, “*Poros* could never have fallen a victim to the charms of *Penia*, since she had none; nor could *Penia* ever have hoped to win over *Poros* by persuasion or force, he being endowed with the strength and wisdom of a god” (Bury xli). Instead, on this reading, *Penia* means poverty or absolute lack, regardless of her apparent “scheming” in the action of the myth.

³⁸ A problem arises when we note that “*Penia* schemed up a plan to relieve her lack of resources” (203a1) while *Poros* got drunk and “fell asleep” (202b9); this suggests that the myth as a whole functions as an *aporia*. Through their actions, *Poros* and *Penia* undercut the qualities they are supposed to personify. *Penia* or Poverty, described we now see more accurately as Need, actually demonstrates the most resourcefulness, wisdom, intelligence, intensity, showing herself to be a “schemer after the beautiful and good”, a “weaver of clever snares,” an “awesome hunter” and “genius of enchantments” and “clever pleadings” and “seduction,” identified precisely with the description of *Poros* (203d3-7). In contrast, *Poros*, child of Cunning, shows his lack of self-possession by getting drunk, and in this vulgarity is not beautiful nor delicate but poor, homeless in that he is “lying on the dirt without a bed, sleeping near people’s doorsteps and.... under the sky” (203c7-d3), thus exemplifying the description of *Penia*. Thus *Poros* shows himself to be *penia* while *Penia* is actually *poros*, showing that what they are called or appear to be is not who they are. Each is its own opposite, and in so doing each undermines itself and the other. This suggests that neither *Penia* or *Poros* is wholly beautiful nor ugly, wise nor ignorant, good nor evil, immortal nor mortal, particularly considering Socrates’ characterization of gods as both beautiful and good (201a5-202c10). This suggests both to be aporetic, the difference being that *Penia* knows that she does not know and is conscious of her ignorance and aporetic nature which is a kind of wisdom, while the other, *Poros*, does not recognize his ignorance and therefore is wise only in name. This shows that she (or he) who calls herself (or himself) *penia* is a philosopher, while he who considers himself to be wise is the opposite. “*Poros*”, drunk upon his own self-importance, perhaps marks one of Socrates’ subtle punctures, deflating the sophists (*Meno* 80a6-7; *Symposium* 198c2-7). This suggests that beneath the surface, received, meaning noted by Bury, Diotima, through discreetly weaving *aporai* (which undercut her final use of a term associated with *aporia* [ἀπόρου (204b7)], meaning not wise, lacks resource, or devoid), renders each term its own opposite.

The association of *penia* with absolute lack, poverty and formlessness remains relatively consistent. Turning to the Commentary (Frag. 5) on Alcman's poem, *Poros* and *Tekmor* who accompanied *Thetis*, brought a path and thereby light and order into the world from a state of *ύλη* (*hule*), formlessness, lack, indeterminacy and void. Thus according to this original myth *Poros* is the way or path out of the *aporia* of *hule*,³⁹ the indeterminacy⁴⁰ and formlessness which is in a sense *penia*.⁴¹ This early association of *penia* as lack and *hule* is later repeated in Plutarch's *de Iside et Osiride*⁴² in which *penia* is matter which is formed by *poros* representing the "intelligible reality" or "Form". Here *penia* refers to *hule*, brute matter, indeterminate, unreasoned and limitless, "like the first *hule* in Alcman's poem" (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 165, note 45). This conception is carried further by Plotinus' interpretation of Plato in *Ennead* III. 5, 9, in which *Penia* or poverty is described as matter and therefore in absolute need⁴³ and represents the indeterminate, unlimited and unreasoned element which is conceived in a similar way to chaos.⁴⁴

Thus in contrast to the term *poros* which not only had different meanings within the Classical Greek culture, but also changed significantly over time, the meaning of *penia* remained relatively consistent. Therefore in order to trace the changes in the term *eros*, which according to the myth is the synthesis of *poros* and *penia*, one must pay special attention to the meaning of the term *poros*.

³⁹ It is only "from *Metis* and *Poros Eros* inherits a mind which is ever alert, never at a loss for an expedient (*poroi*) to obtain (*porizein*) in this universe of barrenness (*penia*) into which he is plunged all the riches towards which he is attracted, in other words the Forms, knowledge and beauty." (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 144)

⁴⁰ On a metaphysical level, "*Penia* represents lack of form and absence of determination" (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, pp. 144-45).

⁴¹ Detienne and Vernant indicate that before *Poros* and *Tekmor* "made their appearance there was a state of matter negatively defined as *aporon kai atekmarton*, by an absence of *Poros* and *Tekmor* and so, in this sense, *penia*" (*Cunning Intelligence*, p. 145).

⁴² Plutarch, *Moralia* 374d.

⁴³ "But his mother is Poverty, because aspiration belongs to that which is in need. And Poverty is matter, because matter, too, is in every way in need, and because the definiteness of the desire for the good—for there is no shape or rational forming principle in that which desires it—makes the aspiring thing more like matter in so far as it aspires" (Armstrong, *Enneads*, III, 5, 9).

⁴⁴ "Chaos is conceived in the same negative way in the later Orphic texts. The *mega chasma* is described negatively as a darkness lacking everything: *astaton kai apeiron kai aoriston*, without stability, without limits, without determination....Because there are no distinctions everything is confused in a dark fog. It is an abyss which has no....limits nor bottom nor foundation" in contrast to Nereus who in the Orphic Hymn is the "foundation and base of the ocean, the limit of the earth and the principle of all things". (Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, p. 145)

C. The Relation of the Preceding Argument to the Myth

In order to understand better the interpretations of this myth, let us turn back to the argument that precedes it. When Socrates, at the beginning of his speech, questions Agathon (which ironically is the Greek term for good, *agathos*), he shows that *eros* is “the love of something, and... that he loves things of which he has a present need” (200e6-7), that which he lacks. From Agathon’s speech, Socrates accepts the claim that as “the gods’ quarrels were settled by the love of beautiful things” (201a5) so *eros* desires what is beautiful, but this however implies that *eros* lacks beauty. Furthermore, as “all good things are beautiful, he will need good things” (201c6-7) which shows that *eros* is neither good nor beautiful. At this point he invokes Diotima⁴⁵ behind whom he effaces himself, stating that *eros* is neither beautiful nor ugly, good nor bad, wise nor ignorant, immortal nor mortal, but a *δαιμόνιον* (*daimonion*), an intermediary between gods and men, at which point he recounts the myth of the birth of *Eros*.

Regardless of which meaning of the term *poros* is employed, this argument rehearses the formation of the conception of *eros* of the subsequent myth, the coming together of *Poros* and *Penia*. By Socrates stating that *eros* is for something, which it lacks, *Eros* is characterized by a lack of something, *penia*. In the first use of *poros* *Eros* due to his *poros*, his cunning and resourcefulness, advances towards that which is full of resource, possesses the beautiful and good, from which he tries to satiate his lack, *penia*. As *Eros* always lacks the good and the beautiful by definition, he will always be poor and

⁴⁵ Plato’s reasons for invoking a mantic female figure as Socrates’ instructor, though perhaps involving the description of a real figure, remain open to a wide variety of interpretations. Cobb (p. 71) notes that this gesture of making Socrates’ philosophical superior a woman would have shocked. He and Sayre (pp. 111-2) considers this to be a statement against male sexism, while Cavarero (*In Spite of Plato*, p. 101) believes this to undermine and exclude women. Bury (xxxix) sees her as a fictional personage and as representing the prophetic temperament. (See also Bury xl and Stewart p. 428.) This contrasts with A. E. Taylor (pp. 224, 230-1) who sees her as a historical figure, as does Halperin (p. 120). Diotima doubles or “supplants the Platonic Socrates”. (Bury xxxix.) This contrasts with Cornford’s reading in *The Unwritten Philosophy* (p. 71) in which her presence is seen as Socrates’ courtesy to Agathon which leads to a perfectionist reading in which Diotima functions as a perfectionist tool. (Deb, “Socrates and Alcibiades,” p. 5) Though it is impossible to establish which reading is accurate, since she responds specifically to each of the speeches in her speech, most poignantly exemplified by her response to Aristophanes’ speech, whether or not she was a historical figure, her speech is a construction of Socrates. (For a more thorough discussion see Halperin’s “Why Diotima is a Woman”, pp. 119-24.)

aporos, yet as he is “resourceful and cunning”, indicative of the first use of *poros*, he will always be directed towards the beautiful and good and thereby be the “passage” or “way” towards it, indicative of the second use of the term *poros*. Moreover if, as in Plotinian thought, *poros* is conceived of as “possession”, “plenty” or “wealth”, the myth still seems as fully to depict the argument preceding it. Within this interpretation, *Penia* represents the lack of goodness and beauty, while *Poros* represents its possession being full of “reason-principles”. *Eros* being the merging of these lacks the good and beautiful yet possesses it⁴⁶ enough to know what it lacks.⁴⁷ This reading therefore also exemplifies the claim that *Eros* stands midway between good and evil, wisdom and ignorance, beauty and ugliness, and is a *daimon*, an intercessor between the mortals and immortals and therefore a passage towards the good and beautiful, simultaneously lacking and possessing the good. Thus the prior argument remains depicted through the myth,⁴⁸ in order to establish the meaning of *eros* as the synthesis of *poros* and *penia*, even though on this interpretation the meaning of *poros* has shifted.

⁴⁶ The presence of the beautiful in relation to *eros* is illustrated most eloquently by Plotinus when he writes of the soul, “when it sees anything of that kin, or a trace of that kinship, thrills with immediate delight, takes its own to itself. For the primal source of love is a tendency of the soul towards pure beauty, in a recognition, in a kinship, in an unreasoned consciousness of friendly relations...when anything brings delight and a sense of kinship, its very image attracts.”(*Enneads* 3.5.1. MacKenna translation) Clearly within the *Symposium*, “kinship” with the beautiful indicates Socrates’ response to Aristophanes’ speech (192e8-1933; cf. 205d9-e6) implying further a “fallen state” of mankind, a state noted by Cornford, pp. 128-9 and Guthrie, “Plato, the Man and his Dialogues, p. 393.

⁴⁷ Plotinus’ reading of *Poros* in the myth seems to have been derived in part from his reading of *Symposium* 204A and B. He writes *Eros* “is not entirely destitute; the deficient seeks more of what it has, and certainly nothing absolutely void of good would ever go seeking the Good.” (MacKenna, III, 5, 9) In *Ennead* I. 6, 2 “On Beauty”, the “Reason-Principles” impress form upon matter making it beautiful. Likewise, in *Ennead* III. 5, 9, the “Reason-Principles” impress form upon matter making it good (MacKenna, p. 186, note 81). *Eros* being a desire for the good (MacKenna, III, 5, 9), and being midway between good and evil, beauty and ugliness, seeks goodness and beauty as something which it already in part possesses and feels a kinship with (III. 5, 1). For this reason Plotinus in his reading of the myth sees *poros* as indicating a possession of beauty and goodness, and *eros* as having a partial possession, the fulfilment of which it pursues. For a similar later reading see Ficino *On Love*, Speech VI, 7, p. 117.

⁴⁸ Bury (xl), Stewart (p. 428) and Santas (p. 30) all see the argument depicted through the myth. Bury (xl) states that while showing Socrates’, in the guise of Diotima, ability to rival Aristophanes in “imagination and inventive fancy”, the myth’s use of allegory “puts into a concise picture those characteristic features of the love-impulse which are subsequently developed in an abstract form”. A. E. Taylor’s understanding of both myth and scientific description/ logic is that they are similar in that they are forms of knowing, as opposed to the forms, which in his reading are beyond knowing. “Because ‘vision’ is direct, the content of a ‘tale’ or ‘myth’ cannot really convey it. A ‘tale’ is as much a mere form of ‘knowing about’ as a scientific description, and as a form of ‘knowing about’ it is, of course, inferior” (p. 231). Taken in such a way, Plato, aware of the difference in types of language, myth speaking to the poet while the “scientific” account addresses the philosopher, brings poetry and philosophy to an agreement with regard to the meaning of love.

D. *Eros* as the Child of *Poros* and *Penia*

In the myth, *Eros* is the child of *Poros* and *Penia*.⁴⁹ As the child of *Poros*, which shows Plato to be focusing here upon the first meaning, “he is a schemer after the beautiful and the good; he is brave, impetuous, and intense, an awesome hunter, always weaving snares, resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom through all his life, a genius of enchantments, potions and clever pleadings” (*Symposium* 203d5-d8). He represents “a way or means of achieving, accomplishing, discovering” qualified by “contrivance device and resource” (Liddell and Scott, p. 1256) but, simultaneously following the second meaning of *poros*, through this skill he represents a pathway, the means by which the lack can be satiated. However as he is simultaneously the child of *Penia*, he remains in a state of lack, poverty and need. “In the first place he is always poor, and he’s far from being delicate and beautiful...instead he is tough and shrivelled and shoeless and homeless, always lying on the dirt without a bed, sleeping at people’s doorsteps and in the roadsides under the sky, having his mother’s nature, always living in Need” (*Symposium* 203c8-d4). *Eros*, the son of *Penia* is in *penia*, “helpless, poor and needy”, losing what he gains. Because of his intrinsic lack he is aporetic and therefore “perplexed” in “doubt, difficulty, hesitation” and therefore is “without passage, having no way in, out, or through” his lack (Liddell and Scott, p. 195). Thus *Eros* is “by nature... never completely without resources, nor is he ever rich,”⁵⁰ in beauty and goodness.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Guthrie (“Plato, the Man and his Dialogues”, p. 375) and Bury (101) note that for Spenser Love is “begot of Plentie and of Penurie.”

⁵⁰ Price (p. 20) notes that in contrast to Nussbaum’s reading of this myth *Eros* is “a pauper, but not a loser. He is ‘portionless in the beautiful and good things’ (202d5) in that none of them is his stable possession, but not to the extent that they always elude him. He is the son of Resource as well as poverty (203c5)...now living now perishing, now knowing now unknowing, in a manner that may reflect the intermissions of genital sexuality (203e1).” Nussbaum (*Fragility*, p. 179) argues that for Diotima beauty is “uniform, the same kind. All manifestations of *Kalon* must be significantly like one another that if you lack one kind it is natural to conclude that you lack them all”. This argument according to Price does not work as one can have some beauty but want more, disallowing Nussbaum’s understanding of the idea of homogeneity in beauty. Therefore, saying love is destitute signifies “‘what I love I lack’, and not ‘If I love anything I lack everything’” (also see Price, Appendix I), which is exemplified by the mixed nature of *eros*, midway between resource and poverty. (See also a modern personification of *Eros* in Rameau’s nephew of Diderot’s *Le Neveu de Rameau*.)

Due to *Eros* being the child of *Penia*, possessing this lack, he is consistently aporetic with regard to wisdom. Diotima makes this clear when *Eros* is described as

“between wisdom and ignorance.... None of the gods loves wisdom or wants to become wise—for they are wise—and no one else who is wise already loves wisdom; on the other hand, no one who is ignorant will love wisdom either or want to become wise. For what’s especially difficult about being ignorant is that you are content with yourself, even though you’re neither beautiful nor good nor intelligent. If you don’t think you need anything, of course you won’t want what you don’t think you need.” *Symposium* 204a1-5

Shorey (*What Plato Said*, p. 194) explains this paradox by stating, “No god is a philosopher or a lover of wisdom, for God already possesses it; no hopelessly ignorant being, for hopeless ignorance is precisely the false conceit of knowledge with the reality—self-sufficiency or self-content.” This passage outlines a fundamental Socratic *aporia* also presented in the *Meno* (80e1-3). If one knows nothing, one is unaware of one’s lack of wisdom whereas if one possesses perfect wisdom, one does not need nor does one desire it. Therefore those who love wisdom fall between wisdom and ignorance.⁵² *Eros* is one of these as he loves beauty, and “as wisdom is extremely beautiful” *Eros* loves σοφία wisdom (203d7), and is a φιλόσοφος, *philosophos*, “one who pursues wisdom” which he lacks⁵³ and feels he lacks,⁵⁴ which is in keeping with his parentage, a mixture of a wise father and ignorant mother. Because of his lack he is considered like his mother to be ignorant, since in his partial knowledge he cannot compensate for the lack. Therefore, given that *Eros* as child of *Poros* and *Penia* is

⁵¹ In response to Agathon, and the others, we are told that *Eros* is not good and beautiful but *Eros* is attracted to that which is beautiful and good. At C4, Dover specifies this further by saying that “τό ἐραστόν (the object possessing the attributes which attract *eros*) is the one which in reality is beautiful, etc.; not just ‘the object of *eros* is beautiful’” (Dover, p. 143). Diotima indicates that those who think *eros* beautiful and good have mistaken the beloved for the lover (Cornford, “The Doctrine of *Eros*”, p. 122).

⁵² Hence Diotima’s discussion at 201e8-10, where she makes “a point about the neutral middle ground between contraries such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’. The point is then made again at 202a2-10 for ‘wise’ and ‘ignorant’ and also at 202b8-13 for ‘mortal’ and ‘immortal’. The aim is partly to stress...lack of wisdom, the condition necessary for being a philosopher.... The state of being neither one thing nor the other, but in between, is fundamental to the theory of love that is being offered” (Osborne, p. 101).

⁵³ In *Eros* is “symbolized the experience of the φιλόκαλος and the φιλόσοφος, who by a law of their nature are incapable of remaining satisfied for long with the temporal objects of their desire and are moved by a divine discontent to seek continually for new sources of gratification.” (Bury xlii)

⁵⁴ As A. E. Taylor (226) states “They feel hunger for wisdom but they feel it precisely because it remains unsatisfied.”

between wisdom and ignorance, *Eros* consistently falls into an *aporia* and remains stuck, due to the presence of the *penia* element within *Eros* resulting in the reduction of *eros* to an *aporia*, a position of no passage in that he knows he does not possess wisdom since he feels a lack, yet is wise enough to know what he lacks. This suggests that for Plato *aporiai* are fundamentally a part of *eros* due to the component of *penia*. Perhaps for this reason Socrates considered himself to know nothing (with the exception of *eros* (*Symp.* 177d9)) and indeed shows the birth of *Eros*, which as we will see for Plato is connected to philosophy as *Eros* is a philosopher, to involve following the path of *Penia* which is the subject of our next chapter.

In this context, however, when considering the wisdom of the gods, we run into a problem. Within the *Symposium*, *Poros* is conceived of as a god, while *Eros* is viewed as midway between the immortals and mortals, a *daimon*. As Bury (xli-xlii) writes, “*Poros* is clearly intended to be regarded as a god and *Penia* is the source of the anti-divine side; and... we are justified in identifying this anti-divine side with mortality”. *Poros* the child of *Metis* is cunning and resourceful resulting in the fact that his son is “a schemer after the beautiful and the good... impetuous, and intense... always weaving snares... a genius of enchantments, potions and clever pleadings” (*Symposium* 203c5-d7). In contrast however, when discussing the *aporia* of knowledge, the gods are said to be wise and therefore not in need of wisdom (204a) as well as happy and in possession of the good and the beautiful (202c). The latter clearly describes a purer and more perfect form of divinity than that expressed in the myth of the birth of *Eros*, through indicating a different type of wisdom possessed by the gods of 204a1-5 when compared with *Poros*, son of *Metis* or cunning in 203b. Therefore though officially a god, who indeed resembles Hermes,⁵⁵ *Poros* represents some features which are not divine. In presenting *Poros* in this way Plato demonstrates an awareness that the wisdom of the gods cannot be associated with these non-divine worldly features such as cunning and contrivance inherited by Plato through Greek mythologies and cosmologies such as Hesiod and perhaps Alcman. In this way Plato implicitly and with subtlety expresses those doubts concerning earlier cosmologies and conceptions of the gods that he makes quite clear in the *Republic* 377e-383, also a middle dialogue. By making the god *Poros* embody a type

⁵⁵ *Homeric Hymns to Hermes*, lines 10ff.

of cunning wisdom, he makes *poros* appear to be a *daimon* as opposed to a god. However so conceived the god *Poros* acts as a “pathway” by which Plato points to the possibility of purer and more divine conceptions of the gods by subverting the inherited mythologies.

Given Plato’s critique, suggested by the distinction between the non-divine qualities and conception of wisdom of the god *Poros* of *Symposium* 203b and the description of the gods in *Symposium* 204a, the seeds of later interpretations appear to be implicit in Plato’s text. Though it is not explicitly said, the wisdom of the gods of 204a--given that it involves *eudaimonia* and the possession of the good and beautiful--suggests “possession, wealth and plenty”. This relates to the crux of later interpretations, suggesting that Plotinus’ view of *Poros* is a conflation/confusion of the *Poros* of cunning and resourcefulness with the wisdom of the gods (204a), whereby not only the term *poros* but as a result the tradition of *eros* takes a new turn, making it digestible for, and providing a linguistic resource which, Christianity integrates into its tradition, as we shall see in the latter part of this thesis with regard to Dante.

Moreover, this gesture of implicitly subverting mythologies is also present in the text with regard to the relative roles of *Poros* and *Penia*. As previously noted, in the myth *Penia* “schemed up a plan to relieve her lack of resources” (203a1) showing herself not to be totally poor or lacking in cunning, but possessing greater resourcefulness as a “schemer after the beautiful and good”, a “weaver of clever snares,” an “awesome hunter” and “genius of enchantments” and “clever pleadings” and “seduction” (203d3-7). *Poros*, by contrast, in that he gets drunk and falls asleep (202b9) shows a lack of self-control and resourcefulness, and hence his poverty (203c7-d3). Therefore in the action of the myth the activities of *Poros* exemplify *penia* while *Penia*’s activities epitomize *poros*, so that the activities of *Poros* and *Penia* undercut the characteristics which they personify so that they undermine themselves and each other creating an *aporia*. These roles contrast with the beautiful, good and happy gods of *Symposium* 201a5-202c10 in that *Penia* and *Poros* both stand between goodness and evil, immortality and mortality, beauty and ugliness, hence seeming to be *daimones* in their nature which contrasts with and subverts our previous description of *Poros* as god versus *Penia* as anti-divine.

This of course is paradoxical in a further sense for, as Bury insists, *Poros* by its nature can have no lack as it is a personification; as we noted above, Bury sees *Penia*'s resourcefulness as purely a literary device which also gives rise to humour. Nonetheless, despite Bury's explanation, Plato does present *penia* and *poros* as each exemplifying features of the other, and in this way seems intentionally to be creating a tension in order not only to subvert the divinity of *Poros* conceived as cunning, but to underline further the lack of perfection/spirituality of the gods of traditional Greek mythology. As with other such subversions and *aporiai* we shall consider in the course of this thesis, this seems intended to lead the reader of the dialogue to reflect further upon the subject under discussion, and hence provoke critical and speculative thought. In this instance the subversion points the reader towards the possibility of a purer notion of god than that of inherited mythologies, given first that *Poros* is presented as exemplifying cunning, an inferior and worldly type of understanding as compared to the wisdom of the gods of *Symposium* 204a, and second that the action of this god undermines what he represents making his opposite seem truer to the characteristic which he is supposed to embody and *vice versa*. Furthermore, given that *Eros* in this myth is the child of *Poros* and *Penia*, this technique of Plato likewise undermines the conception of *Eros* within his own myth pointing to the possibility of a higher, more pure form of *eros*, a form of *eros* directed beyond the physical which is not only Diotima's project but also that of this thesis.

II. THE PATH OF *PENIA*: Socrates as Paradox

Looking more closely at this path of *penia*, we shall examine Socrates who, as noted previously, seems to exemplify *Eros*. In this section we shall consider whether *Eros* is justifiably linked with Socrates in the *Symposium*. In order to do this, it will be necessary to examine how Socrates relates to the description of *Eros* as exemplifying the characteristics of both *Poros* and *Penia*. We shall examine further how Socrates, like *Eros*, stands between mortality and immortality, wisdom and ignorance which will clarify Plato's conception, in the *Symposium*, of the relationship of philosophy and *eros*. We shall then return to the story of the birth of *Eros* and read it in relation to the text as a whole, focusing upon the relationship of Alcibiades and Socrates. Taken together, these explorations point to a very close correlation between Socrates and *Eros*.

A. SOCRATES AS *EROS*

If Socrates personifies *Eros*, he will partake of the natures of both *Poros* and *Penia*.¹ Turning first to *Penia*, partaking of his mother *Penia*'s nature, *Eros* is "always poor" (203c7), responding to Aristophanes' speech (191d1-3) in which "love is born" of lack or poverty. In order to identify Socrates with poverty we must specify what type of poverty. Though Socrates was not wealthy like Plato, Agathon and Alcibiades, he seems to have been a hoplite and was therefore not truly poor. He did have shoes (174a4) and a normal home and family (*Crito*, *Phaedo*) where he slept when he was not on campaigns (*Protagoras*). However, Socrates did claim that he lacked wisdom (*Symposium* 216d4; *Apology* 21:B4-5). Whether to disprove the oracle of Delphi (*Apology* 21A8) or simply as a lover of wisdom desiring to fill this lack, Socrates was motivated to seek wisdom turning to politicians, poets, and orators (*Apology* 21-24). As a lover of wisdom therefore, in a sense corresponding to Pausanias' speech (183a4-b2) in which the lover humbly

¹ Ficino, in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, Speech VI, (pp. 155-58), systematically seeks to show Socrates to be "like Cupid" (though not here displaying his usual exceptional sensitivity to the dialogue). His discussion of worldly Aphrodite in relation to the poverty of *eros* in Speech VI is far richer, though clearly influenced more by the *Phaedrus*.

“went to his knees in public view”, Socrates openly acknowledged his ignorance (*Apology* 31bc). Furthermore as Socrates felt he knew nothing and therefore could teach nothing, he did not set himself up as a teacher and refused to accept fees, though allowing all to listen to him (*Apology*. 33a). Socrates, then, did not seek financial wealth; rather, while he sought to disprove the oracle and deflated the false beliefs of others (*Apology* 21e4-22a4), his mission represents his desire for the wisdom that he lacks which he believes is to be pursued through dialectical discussion with others.

However Socrates, though historically probably not very poor, in Plato deliberately cultivates the impression/image of poverty in order to represent aspects of *Eros* and cultivate an identity between Socrates and *Eros*, particularly in the *Symposium*. Plato does this through representing Socrates as usually going barefoot (*Symposium* 174a4 and 220b7), and wearing only a light *himation* in winter (219b6-7 and 220b6)², thereby highlighting his disinterest in possessions (*Symposium* 219e1-2). In this way, through his depiction of Socrates, Plato is redefining true poverty. As physical poverty normally desires its physical needs to be met first of all, Socrates’ disinterest shows that he feels that he does not need nor does he value material objects (and physical gratification; see *Symposium* 219c). In this way he subverts the normal understanding of poverty and wealth, pointing to wisdom as true riches and lack thereof as poverty. In so doing he redefines poverty as pertaining not to the body but to the soul (173c) and in this sense he sees himself as poor.

Diotima describes *Eros* as “far from being delicate and beautiful” (203c8) and as “shrivelled” (203d1) (responding directly to Agathon’s speech 195a9-10, 195d1-6, referring to *Iliad* 19. 92; and 196a9-b3). Socrates was known for his lack of beauty. Alcibiades compares Socrates to the satyr Marsyas 215b6 who has a “horse’s tail or ears, sometimes the traits of goats” (Nehamas, p. 65) and then states “Nobody, not even you, Socrates, can deny that you look like them” (214b6). In Cicero,³ Zopyrus’ physiognomic study of Socrates supports his lack of beauty, Socrates having a face revealing “a number of vices”, vices which Socrates attests to having “thrown out” of himself. Kierkegaard (p.

² In *Symposium* 220b8 the other soldiers took offence at this behavior and viewed it suspiciously, suggesting that it was not necessary, not out of true poverty, but voluntary asceticism either out of disinterest in the physical or to make a point.

³ *Tusculan Disputations*, IV, 37; *Opera* IV, p. 419.

212) suggests Socrates' lack of beauty to be one of the ironic devices that he used to mislead people.

As Diotima describes *Eros* as being “tough” or “harsh” (203d1) (responding to the speech of Agathon, 195e1-8 discussing the delicacy of *Eros*), so Socrates exemplifies this aspect of *Eros* in that Alcibiades describes how he “took hardships of the campaign much better” than anyone else (219e9), enduring “hunger” (220a1) and sleepless nights (220c5-d4). He was resistant to the cold (220a6) exemplifying *Eros* in sleeping without a blanket, as shown when in Potidaea⁴ he went out in “frightfully cold...weather wearing nothing but the same old light cloak” (ἱμάτιον, *himation*)(220b2, 6; Osborne p. 95). Also, prior to this excursion Alcibiades, in an effort to seduce him, covers Socrates in his mantle as Socrates wore only a “light cloak [ἱμάτιον] which, though it was the middle of winter, was his only clothing” (Osborne p. 96 refers to 219b5-7). Not only was he shoeless but “in bare feet he made better progress on the ice” (220b7). This toughness can be seen as taking the form of self-discipline (in response to Eryximachus' speech 186d6-12, 187d4-5 who discusses the harmonizing of opposites both internal and external resulting in σωφροσύνη, *sophrosune*). Socrates was unaffected by alcohol (214a5-6), “sober and temperate” (216d7) with regard to boys, and in refusing the seduction of Alcibiades is admired for “his moderation, his fortitude” (219d5).

Furthermore, through the myth Diotima describes *Eros* as “shoeless” (203d1). (This responds to Agathon's speech's positive view of going barefoot 195d2-3; *Iliad* 19: 92, “making his home in the characters, and in the souls” and therefore in the heart as we see with Alcibiades (*Symp.* 218a5) who is “bitten in the heart” by love.) Socrates “generally goes about barefoot” (174a4)⁵ as do his followers (173b2). As mentioned Alcibiades describes how Socrates while other soldiers “bundled up their feet in woolly socks and sheepskin boots...got over the ice better in his bare feet than others did in their boots” (220b).

Eros is “homeless” (203d1) (responding to Aristophanes' speech 191d6-7 in which a sense of homelessness is due to loss of one's other half, and therein a loss of

⁴ Potidaea, a city of Thrace allied to Athens, was induced by Corinth to revolt in 432B.C. The city was besieged by the Athenians and eventually defeated in a bloody local war, 432-430B.C.

⁵ Also see *Phaedrus* 229a3-4, Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 103, 362; Xenophon *Memorabilia*, I, 6,2.

completeness. Ficino's interpretation p. 123 of "homeless" concords with Aristophanes in that through love the soul "goes into exile. For every thought is devoted not to the discipline and tranquillity of its own soul, but to the service of the man beloved"). For Osborne (p. 95), as *Eros* is homeless not in the sense that he lacked "a polis but... an οἶκος, *oikos*" (a home, house or household) (203d1), so Socrates for her is represented, with the exception of the *Protagoras*, away from home, certainly not "a domestic man with a home life or economic interests" (also see Ficino, p. 156 with Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 5. 37. 108). Therefore, though strictly speaking Socrates is not homeless as he lives in the deme of Alopeke, here again Plato seems to be cultivating the appearance of a certain aspect of *Eros*. Similarly, suggestive of *Eros* who "[lies] on the dirt without a bed"⁶ (203d2) and "[sleeps] at people's doorsteps" (203d2-3) (responding directly to Pausanias' view of the lover 183a4-5), Plato depicts Socrates not as sleeping rough but as having long moments of abstraction/philosophical reflection at unusual times and places. Among these are moments of thought on the "next-door neighbour's porch (175a8),

⁶ Ficino (p. 123) takes the Greek word *chamaipetes* which means "on the ground or low-flying" to mean humble. He refers further to *Gorgias* 494d and Diogenes Laertius 2.5.21 as examples.

In chapter VI, Ficino examines these aspects of *Eros* with regard to worldly Aphrodite, in relation to the different conceptions of love in the *Phaedrus*, not identifying Socrates with *Eros*. With regard to *chamaipetes*, Ficino writes, "For he sees that repeatedly, on account of the abuse of love, 'lovers live without common sense, and through their trivial preoccupations great causes fail.'" (p. 148) Sears refers to Ficino's Oxford manuscript fol. 34v where he cites his reference, Propertius *Elegies* 2.12. "Lovers give themselves up to beloveds so far that they try to be changed into them altogether, and to reproduce them in words as well as deed." *Chamaipetes* seems to point to Pausanias' speech (183a4-b2) in which the lover "went on his knees in public view and begged in the most humiliating way." However, Ficino's reference to this section of the *Symposium* shows an influence of the conceptions of *eros* described in *Phaedrus* 252e1-253c2. This influence extends to Ficino's reading of "without a bed" in that "he has no place to rest, and nothing to cover himself with. For since all things seek their own origin, the little blaze of love, kindled in the appetite of the lover by the sight of the beautiful body, tries to fly back to the same body," referring to *Phaedrus* 255c. However it is clear from his description of being "without cover" that he does not identify the Socrates of the *Symposium* with *Eros*, but uses the description of *Eros* to explore the *Phaedrus* and his own experience. "Who will deny that Love wanders without cover and naked? For who can conceal Love, whom a wild, ox-like, fixed stare betrays, whom stammering speech reveals, and redness or paleness of face, frequent sighs, shaking parts, perpetual complaining, inappropriate praises, sudden indignation, boasting, flirting, petulance, groundless suspicion, and obsequious devotion, all give away? For just as in the sun and fire, light accompanies the heat of its ray, so external evidences accompany the internal fire of love." (Ficino, p. 124; see the lover described by Lysias' non-lover *Phaedrus* 232b7-233d4) The point that Ficino does not identify Socrates as *Eros* is shown further with regard to his analysis (pp. 123-4) of "bare footed," "sleeps in doorways" which likewise show awareness of the *Phaedrus*. However in Speech IV (p. 155) equating Socrates with heavenly Aphrodite, Ficino calls Socrates the "true lover" and likens him to *Eros*.

which “is quite a habit of his” (175b2) or when outside all night thinking (220d1-4), which in some way resembles “lovers who pay no attention to their responsibilities”.⁷

As *Eros* is the son of *Penia* which means poverty or need, *Eros* is “always in need” 203d4 (responding to the description in Aristophanes’ speech 192e9-10, 193a2-3 of a “longing after that primeval wholeness”; also the ambiguity of love from Pausanias 180e6-181a6), echoing Socrates’ argument for describing *Eros* in terms of lack (200e8-10) of the good and the beautiful (201c6-7). Socrates, of course, states that he knows nothing, as noted when Alcibiades says “He likes to say he’s ignorant and knows nothing” (216d4; also see *Theaetetus*, 150c4 and the *Apology* 21b4-5). In the *Symposium*, however he makes an exception saying, “The only thing I say I understand is τὰ ἐρωτικά” (*ta erotika*, the things of love; 177d9-e1), that love which is a lack of beauty and goodness. There is perhaps more than a hint here that Socrates does not possess the beautiful and good (216d4).

As *Poros* is the child of *Metis*, according to the first definition of *poros Eros* and therefore Socrates are beings of resourcefulness and cunning. *Eros* “[schemes] after the beautiful and the good” (203d4-5) and is “resourceful in his pursuits of intelligence” (203d6-7) (responding to Agathon’s speech 195a8 in which *Eros* is “the most beautiful and the best” and also to Aristophanes’ speech 191d1-3 in which *Eros* is seeking a goodness which has been lost). Likewise, Socrates schemes after Agathon (222b4-7; the “good” in Greek) and pursues the beautiful and good, wisdom, evident in his questioning of Diotima (201d6; also Ficino, p. 157). As Diotima considers *Eros* to be “brave” 203d5 (a response to Phaedrus’ speech concerning the army of lovers 178e3-179b3, Alcestis’ self-sacrifice for the love of her husband 179b4-c7, and Achilles dying for Patroclus 179d1-10, 179e), Socrates saved the life of Alcibiades (220d8-e3, cf. also 221b1-10). In refusing to take credit for his heroism, Socrates demonstrates the selfless nature of “true bravery” which is reminiscent of Alcestis, a conception which is utterly foreign to the hubristic Alcibiades, further underlining the superficiality of fame and reputation perhaps for his benefit. The intensity (203d6) of *Eros*’ pursuit of the good (replying to Aristophanes’ speech’s (192c1-3) description of the lover’s intense pursuit of his

⁷ “For being completely preoccupied with a single thing, lovers pay no attention to responsibilities. Thus, leading their life by chance, they are exposed to all the dangers of fortune, just as those who lead their life naked under the sky are exposed to all storms.” (Ficino, VI, p. 124)

beloved), is made visible in Socrates' contemplation on the neighbour's porch (175a8) and at Potidaea where Socrates "couldn't resolve [the problem], but he would not give up" until the following day (220c6-7). *Eros* is "a lover of wisdom" (203d7) correcting Phaedrus' speech which calls *Eros* wise (178c4-d1), teaching every man how "to live well." *Eros* as a lover of wisdom is clearly personified by Socrates.⁸ Along with Alcibiades and the other speakers Socrates undergoes the "Bacchic frenzy of philosophy" (218b3-4). *Eros* "always [weaves] snares" (203d6) and is "a genius with enchantments, potions and clever pleadings" (203d8) (responding to Pausanias 183a6-7 in which the lover on his knees "swears all sorts of vows"). Alcibiades compares Socrates to the Sirens (216b1), and to Marsyas "casting a spell on people" (215c1) as "his melodies have in themselves the power to possess and so reveal those people who are ready for the god and his mysteries" (215c6-8). "We are all transported, completely possessed (215d4-5), like "frenzied Corybantes" (215e2-5) who were "legendary worshippers of Cybele, who brought about their own derangement through music and dance".⁹

Eros as the son of *Poros* is full of "Resourcefulness" (in response to Phaedrus' 178c1-2 and Agathon's speeches 195a7-8, 197d8, which agree on the point that *Eros* is "the greatest good"). Socrates likewise shows much resource in that though he does not know everything, he knows that he does not know, showing traces of recognition of knowledge, partial knowledge. More importantly however this indicates that he possesses a skill or technique, primarily that of reasoning which he uses to seek the truth. Applying this technique he tests and deflates the positions of others thereby showing that he knows enough about the subject, whether *sophrosune*, *kalon*, or *agathon*, to demonstrate that the

⁸ To follow Socrates (as in the case of Apollodorus, 173a) is to take the road of philosophy, exemplified by Apollodorus leaving his home city of Phaleron to travel to Athens, symbolic of "his departure from his old, non-philosophical lifestyle to the new Socratic life" (Osborne, p. 88). Though Osborne states that Athens is Socrates' home and acknowledges that his home is the deme of "Alopeke, which was just outside the walls [of Athens], across the Ilissus valley" (Osborne, p. 98), Osborne does not seem to draw the inference that like Apollodorus, Socrates is a fellow traveller towards Athens, which indicates in this context the location where wisdom can be acquired through dialectical relationships. Socrates like Apollodorus is journeying towards the beautiful and good which has not as yet been achieved, further suggesting that the journey is uphill (172a) which "coincides with the motif of the ascent in Diotima's speech" (p. 89; see 210a-e). "Hence it is significant that the *Symposium* starts with a journey up to the city, and that its account of the love of truth and beauty takes place in Agathon's house within the confines of the city of Athens." (Osborne, p. 89)

⁹ Nehamas, p. 65; see *Ion* 553e and *Laws* 790e; also see Ficino, p. 157.

other person does not know what he is talking about, i.e. that he is ignorant, which in an inverted way is evidence of his personal resourcefulness.

The paradoxical nature of *Eros* is further shown in that “he is by nature neither mortal or immortal” (203e1). Alcibiades speaks of the hidden inner divine nature of Socrates the man: “I once caught him when he was open like Silenus’ statues, and I had a glimpse of the figures he keeps hidden within: they were so godlike—so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing” (217a1-2, also 215b). Furthermore as Socrates is unique, “the best you can do is not to compare him to anything human, but to liken him, as I do, to Silenus and the satyrs, and the same goes for his ideas and arguments” (221d5-7). Alcibiades’ feelings for him border on adoration, as he viewed Socrates as beyond human yet below the divine; it can thus be argued that Alcibiades considered Socrates to be daimon-like, a messenger “who [shuttles] back and forth between the two, conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men [he brings] commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices. Being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all” (202e3-7; which responds to Eryximachus’ speech which describes *eros* as intermediary 188b7-d1, holding the world together 213d2). Socrates “enables mortals to perceive their lack of divine qualities and hence to desire to possess them, providing a link between mortals and immortals”.¹⁰ Thus, according to Osborne, Socrates, like *Eros*, is an intermediary “whose task it is to convey the wisdom of the priestess Diotima to the company at the party” (Osborne, p. 101).

Diotima’s myth links *Eros*’ position between mortal and immortal to the state of being “between ignorance and knowledge” (204a1). As discussed in the last chapter with regard to 204a2-9, Diotima explains that as the gods are wise they do not desire wisdom while the ignorant do not desire wisdom because they do not recognize their lack thereof. For this reason “without *Eros* the mortals would not only lack those features but be so far from appreciating them that they would not even perceive their lack or the desirability of the features they lacked. *Eros* is responsible for their ability to lack and their desire to make good the lack” (Osborne, p. 110). The implication here is that as immortals do not lack wisdom, not to mention goodness, beauty and being, they experience no *eros*, indicative of a purer conception of divinity than that found in the Greek cosmogonies

¹⁰ Osborne, p. 110; see also references to Socrates’ divine sign in *Phaedrus* and *Apology*.

discussed in the last chapter. In contrast, Socrates while loving wisdom acknowledges that he is not wise (*sophos* or one of “the wise,” a sophist) and because of his general lack is not immortal. However Socrates, though lacking wisdom recognizes his lack of wisdom, indicating that he is not devoid of understanding, and therefore to some extent partakes in immortality, perfect understanding being an attribute of the gods (204a1-3). Therefore Socrates like *Eros* is neither wise nor ignorant, neither mortal nor immortal but between the two. Osborne argues that while this stresses “Socrates’ own lack of wisdom, the condition necessary for being a philosopher,.... the state of being neither one thing nor the other, but in between, is fundamental to the theory of love that is being offered (Osborne, p. 101).

At this point, once again, we encounter the interconnection of *eros* and philosophy in the figure of Socrates. Socrates as *Eros* lacks the good and the beautiful (201c6-7). As Socrates personifies *Eros* he desires the good and the beautiful (203d3-4). Likewise Socrates lacks knowledge but knows that he lacks it (216d3-4) and in so doing, is a *philosophos*, a lover of wisdom (204b5, 203d6). Therefore, in Socrates’ statement “the only thing I understand is the things of love” (177d7-e1; Nehamas uses “art” for “things”),¹¹ we see the relation of *Eros* and philosophy. As love is the desire for the good and the beautiful, and philosophy is the love of wisdom, which comes from the contemplation of the good and the beautiful in the *Symposium*, Plato through his depiction of Socrates is implying that love and philosophy are inseparable. In this context *Eros* and philosophy are personified in Socrates who is the ideal lover and the ideal philosopher.¹²

Socrates, it seems, has the leading characteristics not only of the first but also of the second definition of *Poros*, as well as the attributes of *Penia*, which together make up the character of *Eros*. We saw in the last chapter that *poros* according to the first definition means resourcefulness and cunning which is connected here to the second definition, “pathway”, in that through resourcefulness a path is opened through the *aporia* or “lack of pathway”. As *aporia* means “lack of pathway”, it is associated with *penia*

¹¹ Osborne (p. 93) suggests that Socrates’ stance on his personal ignorance is “perhaps... slightly moderated to the extent that he does now claim to have learnt from Diotima, and hence to have some knowledge concerning love that is derivative of her expertise in that area.”

¹² Osborne, pp. 93-4.

which as “lack” or “poverty” indicates a lack of resourcefulness which results in a lack of path. Therefore representing *Eros* as the child of *Poros* and *Penia* indicates that need motivates the individual to alleviate her/his poverty, yet requires resourcefulness to achieve its end.¹³

In this context, Socrates in being likened to *Eros* represents *Penia* in so far as he has no wisdom or “stable knowledge of truth”. In this way he is *aporos*, without resource or pathway. However, he does possess a great element or strain in his nature of resourcefulness/contrivance in the form of a mental technique/skill which is mainly the ability to reason by which he also represents *Poros*. This mental ability while proving useful in showing what is false belief or opinion, thereby opening a “pathway” through individual problems or *aporiai*, causes him to uncover increasingly more problems. So while it seems to enable him to gain wisdom, the wisdom he acquires is constantly slipping away (203e5-6) reducing him to a state of *aporia*, “a state of lack”, though he, as he still possesses this mental ability which provides a pathway through, is not himself caught in an *aporia*.

¹³ Osborne argues that poverty causes *eros* to lead. *Penia* motivates and for this reason *Eros* is a leader. Though I do not dissent from this position, I am doubtful of Osborne’s use of the text to support this point. In the text Socrates is guiding Aristodemus to Agathon’s party, and Aristodemus fully imitates and submits to the guidance of Socrates. Osborne (p. 91) believes there is a reversal (174a3-6); “Aristodemus is actually more Socratic than Socrates. Socrates, on this occasion, though never elsewhere, has bathed and dressed in his best clothes and party shoes. Aristodemus, by contrast, is not dressed or washed for the party since he had not expected to go to one, and, as always, he is barefoot.” Osborne thinks Socrates, professing to be Agathon’s lover, adopts Agathon’s form of dress and lifestyle, thereby becoming the personification of Agathon’s conception of *Eros*, shortly to be represented in Agathon’s speech. The idea that Aristodemus is more Socratic is problematic for two reasons. First, Socrates arrives later at Agathon’s home because he was detained due to his tendency towards deep philosophical reflection, which may be likened to the twenty four hours he spent in contemplation on the campaign at Potidaea (220c3-d4), a tendency which Alcibiades admired (220c1; also see Odyssey 4: 252; A. E. Taylor (p. 233) interprets this as being the moment Socrates beheld the vision of the form of the good, though this seems an over-speculation on Taylor’s part). Second, Agathon’s house (*agathon* meaning good) only becomes the site where the beautiful and good will be manifested once Socrates arrives, Socrates being the *accoucheur* by which the beautiful and good will be delivered.

However in partial support of Osborne, Socrates may adopt a more formal dress to honour Agathon though for a different reason and towards different ends than she proposes. It seems more likely that Socrates’ conformity is a tactic by which he hopes to lead Agathon to philosophy. Socrates, speaking a different language from Agathon, the language of philosophy, and knowing that Agathon did not understand the terms of this language and therefore would be unable to penetrate into the content of this language (the message), used terms which Agathon could understand. Socrates established a common language, which was not his own and in so doing came down to Agathon’s level in order to teach him a truer language of philosophical reflection. Though this element of disguise may represent a moment of impiety, as Socrates represented himself as other than himself, this gesture, nevertheless formed a potential bridge by which Agathon could likewise become a pursuer of wisdom, a *philosophos*, like himself.

Nonetheless because of the presence of a *penia* element which is *aporos*, *Eros* can never be full of resource but by definition will always be lacking and therefore partially poor. Similarly, regardless of his faculty of reason, Socrates, in that he lacks knowledge except for the knowledge of *eros* which likewise indicates a lack (177d7-e1), demonstrates the continued presence of the *penia* element which, though not reducing him to an *aporia*, suggests a certain dominance of the *penia* element regardless of his efforts to overcome it and which in turn motivates his efforts. Thus the way of love and philosophy come together in the *Symposium* as the path of *penia*, embodied by Socrates.

B. SOCRATES EXEMPLIFYING THE PATH OF *PENIA*

Returning to the myth, the action within the myth comments upon the interaction within the *Symposium* as a whole. To set the scene, Osborne notes the resemblance between the feast of the gods at the birth of Aphrodite and Agathon's banquet.

Just as poverty, the mother of *Eros*, hangs about the door at the party to celebrate the birth of Aphrodite, so people keep turning up outside the door at Agathon's party, [which represents] the vision of beauty that everyone yearns to be included in... Just as Aphrodite, at whose birthday party *Eros* was conceived, is a beauty to which *Eros* is devoted, so Beauty itself, and the vision of it revealed at Agathon's party, is the object of Socrates' passionate devotion. (Osborne, p. 96)

Alcibiades arrives, mythologically speaking in the role or the place of *Penia*, intending to seduce Agathon (the good) but finds his place changed and himself praising and perhaps trying to seduce Socrates. In this interaction, Socrates is *Poros* as "resource" in that he opens a "pathway" to the beautiful and good which Alcibiades as *Penia* lacks. However, though Alcibiades thinks Socrates is the pathway to the good and beautiful, Socrates acknowledges that he lacks knowledge to Alcibiades (216d3-4; "He likes to say he's ignorant and knows nothing") and to the other speakers (177d7-e1) saying he only knows love which is the synthesis of lack and contrivance. So Socrates cannot properly be considered to be in possession of the good and beautiful but is rightfully described as *Eros* as he is between the beautiful and ugly, good and bad, wisdom and ignorance.

Following the first definition of *Poros* Socrates is “a cunning contriver” which Barker¹⁴ points out is more like Hermes (see the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* lines 10ff and *passim*) than like Apollo who in his perfect wisdom is the knower of all truth. Further, the implication in Alcibiades’ attempted seduction of Socrates is that Socrates represents *Poros* as “contrivance” and “pathway” which Alcibiades needs in order to attain what he desires.

However, Alcibiades arrives drunk resembling *Poros* in the garden of the myth.¹⁵ Though it may be argued that the drunkenness is only a motif, a “literary effect”, as did Bury (xli) concerning the role reversal of *Penia* and *Poros* discussed in the last chapter, nonetheless this present case of Socrates and Alcibiades likewise reflects an inversion of roles which seems to bring about an underlying tension, apparently in order to make a point about *eros*. Returning to the discussion of the previous chapter, *Penia* in the myth turned out to be more resourceful than *Poros*;¹⁶ *Penia* becomes the entity who weaves the schemes to capture the beautiful and good, in order to enrich herself (203b7-9). *Poros* or Resource in contrast shows himself through his drunken abandon to be the less resourceful, and to display poverty with regard to “cunning intelligence”. This inverted version of the characters of *Poros* and *Penia* appears to be far more in keeping with the actual relationship of Alcibiades and Socrates as expressed in the *Symposium*.

In his drunkenness and excess Alcibiades, although in his drunkenness echoing *Poros*, actually shows his *penia*. This inversion is enacted through what Alcibiades conceives to be his role reversal. Though Alcibiades was never the beloved of Socrates in that Alcibiades never possessed that which Socrates lacked and desired, Alcibiades initially perceived himself to be the embodiment of beauty and therefore the beloved of Socrates (217a4-8, 222b3-4). Ultimately however Socrates came to represent the object

¹⁴ Barker, Personal Communication, 2003.

¹⁵ The imagery used to describe *Poros*’ entrance into the garden in Plotinus’ *Enneads* III.5.9 (“What could these divine splendours and beauties be but the Reason-Principles streaming from him? These Reason-Principles—this *Poros* who is the lavishness, the abundance of Beauty—are at one and are made manifest; this is the Nectar-drunkenness.”) resembles the colourful imagistic sensuous manner in which Alcibiades enters the house of Agathon (212c4-e1) far more than the comparatively purely abstract intellectual revelation of the form of the beautiful (210e5-6), a difference which will be the focus of the next section.

¹⁶ Osborne does not note that *Poros*’ resourcefulness is actually the characteristic of *penia*, and that *penia* undercuts *poros*. In her account of this myth, as in her reading of Aristodemus leading Socrates, she reads the text at surface level, whether by the terms of personification, *Penia* and *Poros*, or by the dramatic action of leadership as in Aristodemus, without looking at the undercutting of these emblematic representations. In her reading Osborne does not take into consideration the ironic tension of the dialogue.

of his desire hence his beloved, so that the lover became beloved and the beloved lover (222b3-4) pointing to the undermining of the *erastes* (lover)/*eromenos* (beloved) relationship from Alcibiades' perspective. In this context it is relevant that Alcibiades, who on a superficial level at the party enacted the role of *Poros* by contriving to be near Agathon (the good), had previously through his "cunning" devised a disreputable scheme which showed him to be reduced to an *aporia*¹⁷ like *Penia*. In this way Alcibiades under the guise of "*Poros*" showed himself to be more like *Penia* due to his lack and ethical poverty.

In contrast Socrates, while claiming to know nothing, which likens him to *Penia*, remains sober all night. This enables him to assume the role of contrivance maintaining the upper hand as in the myth, though through his rational ability which in the case of Socrates is always in an effort to seduce others not physically but to philosophy. In this Socrates demonstrates a form of *eros* directed beyond the body in pursuit of philosophical truth. Hence as in the last chapter *Penia* acts more like *Poros* and *Poros* like *Penia*, whereby each undermines the other and itself. However in contrast to the myth in which *Penia* successfully seduces *Poros*, Socrates is not successful in leading Alcibiades beyond his absorption with the physical to philosophy. And similarly, though Alcibiades tries to seduce Socrates ("*Poros*" tries to seduce "*Penia*"¹⁸), as Alcibiades never possessed what Socrates felt he needed and desired which was philosophical truth and virtue, Alcibiades was necessarily unsuccessful in his attempted seduction which was of no interest to Socrates. In this way therefore the undermining in the myth articulated by the reversal of roles within the action acts as a method by which Plato points the reader beyond a physical notion of *eros*, conceived of here as *aporos*, towards a philosophical notion of *eros* which transcends the physical thereby functioning as a pathway towards truth. This brings us back to the beginning of this chapter in which Plato through Socrates was shown to be concerned about the poverty of the soul as contrasted with that of the body. For this reason, in his *penia* Socrates shows himself to have the

¹⁷ Of particular consequence, Socrates reduces Alcibiades to an *aporia* (219e1): "How could I possibly win him over?" "I had no idea what to do, no purpose in my life; ah, no one else has ever known the real meaning of slavery." (219e5-6)

¹⁸ Clearly however, Socrates possesses a deeper kind of resource (218e1-7) which causes this reversal to occur, though Socrates immediately subverts it (218e8-219a3).

true resource, thereby representing what for the *Symposium* is the perfect exemplification of the aporetic nature of *Eros*.

C. THE SYMPOSIUM'S CONCEPTION OF EROS

The equating of *Eros* and Socrates represents the Plato of the *Symposium's* view of *Eros*, regardless of the fact that the myth of the birth of *Eros* is contained in Diotima's speech, and comes from Socrates' mouth. This is demonstrated by the fact that every significant aspect of *Eros* in the myth responds to one of the other speeches and conceptions of love in the dialogue, while being traced through and materialized in the character of Socrates (though not restricted to Socrates as described by Alcibiades).¹⁹ Without going into the full details of the speech and the precise issues to which Diotima responds in her formulation of *eros*, which would complexify the issue too much, we shall rather focus upon the fact that her conception of *Eros* does respond to all the previous speeches in an effort to formulate a complete conception of *Eros* that takes into

¹⁹ A summary of the connections between the earlier speeches, Diotima's definition of *Eros* and its embodiment in Socrates may be useful here. *Eros* is "always in need" (203d4), responding to Aristophanes' speech (192e9-10, 193a2-3; also the ambiguity of love from Pausanias 180e6-181a6) compare Socrates as shown in (201c6-7; 177d9-e1). *Eros* is "always poor" (203c7), responding to Pausanias' speech (183a4-b2), and Alcibiades at (218c10-d2), and exemplified by Socrates in (221a3, perhaps 20b1-5, 220e7, *Apology* 23b-c, 30a). Furthermore, *Eros* "far from being delicate and beautiful" (203c8) is "shrivelled" (203d1), responds to Agathon's speech (195a9-10, 195d1-6), and is exemplified by Socrates at (215b6; 214b6). *Eros* is described by Diotima as being "tough" or "harsh" (203d1) responding to the speech of Agathon, (195e1-8) which Socrates exemplifies at (219e9; 220a1; 220c5-d4; 220a6; 220b2, 6; 219b5-7; 220b7). This toughness can be seen as taking the form of self-discipline in response to Eryximachus' speech (186d6-12), which Socrates exemplifies at (214a5-6; 216d7; 219d5). *Eros* as "shoeless" (203d1), responding to Agathon's positive view of going barefoot (195d2-3) and Alcibiades (218a5), is demonstrated by Socrates at (174a4; 220b). *Eros* "[lies] on the dirt without a bed" (203d2) and "[Sleeps] at people's doorsteps" (203d2-3), responding to Pausanias' speech (183a4-5), and as exemplified by Socrates at (175a8; 175b2), who also stands outside all night thinking (220d1-4). *Eros* is viewed as "brave" (203d5) in response to Phaedrus' speech at (178e3-179b3; 179b4-c7; 179d1-10, 179e) shown through Socrates at (220d8-e3, 221b1-10). The intensity (203d6) of *Eros*, replying to Aristophanes' speech (192c1-3), is made visible in Socrates at (175a8; 220c6-7). Answering Pausanias' speech (185a6-b6), *Eros*, "a lover of wisdom" (203d7) is clearly personified by Socrates, (218b3-4). That *Eros* "always [weaves] snares" (203d6) and is "a genius with enchantments, potions and clever pleadings" (203d8) is demonstrated through Socrates at (216b1; 215c1; 215c6-8; 215d4-5; 215e2-5), responding to Pausanias' speech at (183a4). That "he is by nature neither mortal or immortal" (203e1) addresses the speech of Eryximachus (188b7-d1; 213d2), and is demonstrated through Socrates at (215b; 217a1-2; 221d5-7; also see 202e3-7). And finally that *Eros* is "between ignorance and knowledge" (204a1), responding to (185b1-c1) is exemplified by Socrates at (177d9-e1). There are numerous other correlations which can be made as Plato's writing is intentionally deeply layered with multiple interconnections on each level. This summary can act as a beginning from which specific points can be drawn, but is clearly only an initial layer of investigation in the area.

account all the parts. As Diotima was not present at the speeches of the *Symposium* while her speech responds to them each individually, it seems that Plato through Socrates is speaking under the guise of Diotima, trying to formulate a true conception of *eros*, which he also shows to be embodied in Socrates. This confirms that the many commentators who make the identification of Socrates with *Eros* are correct.²⁰

Ferrari partially objects to this correlation of Socrates and *Eros*. Ferrari, arguing that, as in the other speeches, Socrates presents a type of love reflecting that person's distinctive sensibility, which in the case of Socrates is philosophical *eros*.²¹ However, in Plato's understanding, *eros* is by definition inseparable from the philosophical as we have seen in our discussion of *poros* and *penia*, and analysis of Socrates as Plato's ideal lover and philosopher. Diotima's myth illustrating the characteristics of *eros*, the integration of *penia* and *poros*, acts as a systematic response to elements of all the previous speeches and incorporates them within itself as if to indicate that the notion of *Eros* which Diotima is presenting is "true". Further, this understanding of *Eros* is fleshed out through Socrates representing as elements of *eros* all the partial truths of the different speeches, which Diotima could not have heard, into one "true" conception of *eros*. This indicates that Socrates is not one kind of *Eros* but, according to the Plato of the *Symposium*, the only kind of *Eros*, "the greatest Socratic paradox [being] Socrates himself"²² the personification of *Eros*.

Thus far we have shown that Socrates is the personification of *Eros* through demonstrating, first, that the descriptions of both *Poros* and *Penia*, who are the parents of *Eros*, are "fleshed out" (Osborne, p. 94) in the life of Socrates. Secondly we have looked at the correspondence between *Eros* and Socrates as intermediaries between wisdom and ignorance, and mortality and immortality in the dialogue. This allowed us to see the

²⁰ Bury maintains that the main purpose of the speech of Alcibiades is "to present us with a vivid portrait of Socrates as exemplar of *Eros*" (*Symp.* 1x; also see A. E. Taylor, p. 233). His view that Socrates represents *Eros* is supported by Cobb, pp. 82-3; Ficino, Speech VII, Santas, p15; Sayre, pp. 126-7; Robin, *La Theorie Platonicienne de l'Amour*, pp. 161-4; Gould, *Platonic Love*, p. 45. Osborne (p. 101) correctly notes that, "Plato chooses to stress certain features of Socrates in this dialogue as part of his definition of love." Also see Kierkegaard (*Concept of Irony*, p. 47) "In the *Symposium* a complement is sought to what is lacking in the dialectical view [of love] by having love exemplified in the person of Socrates, and thus the eulogies on love end in a eulogy on Socrates. Now even if the exemplification of the idea in a personality is a mere element in the idea itself, it nonetheless has its importance in the exposition."

²¹ Ferrari, "Platonic Love", p. 261.

²² Guthrie, "Plato, the Man and his Dialogues", p. 395.

connection of *eros* and philosophy and to better understand what Plato actually means when implying that *eros* and Socrates articulate the synthesis of *poros* and *penia* and how this results in the path of *penia*, exemplified by Socrates. Thirdly, we examined the action of the dialogue specifically with regard to the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades through the myth of the birth of *Eros*, which pointed towards a form of *eros* directed towards philosophical truths, represented by Socrates. Lastly we saw how all the views of *eros* in the dialogue are embodied in the figure of Socrates, showing that for the Plato of the *Symposium*, Socrates acts as the personification of *Eros*.

We shall now turn to examine in more detail Socrates' role as an intermediary through an analysis of the relation between Diotima's revelation of the beautiful and the arrival of Alcibiades, which will permit us to explore this identification of Socrates with *Eros* by one who perhaps knows him better than is normally admitted.

III. SOCRATES AS INTERMEDIARY: THE MOMENT OF VISION AND THE MOMENT OF ALCIBIADES

The end of Diotima's speech and the beginning of Alcibiades' speech create a juxtaposition that further defines Socrates as *eros*. The ascent to the form of the beautiful concludes with a description of the revelation of the Beautiful: "There bursts upon [the initiate] that wondrous vision" (210e5-6). Once experienced this enables the initiate to "give birth not to images of virtue...but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true Beauty" (212a6-8; trans. Nehamas¹), and perhaps achieve immortality which is the ultimate object of *eros*. This revelation is followed by the entrance of Alcibiades. "Suddenly there came a knock at the door)" (212c4). Moments later, "Alcibiades who was shouting in the courtyard, evidently drunk... stood in the doorway, with a mass of ribbons and an enormous wreath of ivy and violets sprouting on his head" (*Symposium* 212d4-e1; trans. Joyce). The suddenness of the arrival of both the Beautiful and Alcibiades draws a connection between these two opposing images/events, the vision of an abstract reality contrasted with the vision of symbols (ivy symbolizing Dionysus and violets being symbols of Aphrodite and the Muses).

A. FIRST LEVEL: TWO TYPES OF LOVE

On the most basic level, Plato wishes to draw a comparison between the Beautiful and Alcibiades which appears to demonstrate the presence of two types of love-object. The form of the Beautiful which is "ever-existent" and therefore not finite (211a1-2),² is

¹ Nehamas translation unless specified.

² Plato writes, οὐδέ τις λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη (*oude tis logos oude tis episteme*), translated as "It will be neither word nor knowledge" (Jowett) or "It will not appear to him as one idea or one kind of knowledge" (Nehamas) (211a6-7). The inherent ambiguity in this statement has caused great division concerning whether the Beautiful is knowable or beyond knowledge, the epitome of being or beyond being. Seemingly contrary to 211a6-7, Cobb states "that the ascent to the final level does not lead to a transcendence of knowledge and reason. Diotima explicitly speaks of this achievement as a knowledge of a single sort" (τινὰ ἐπιστήμην μίαν τοιαύτην, *tina epistemen mian toiauten*, 210d) in which the lover achieves an "understanding which is none other than the understanding of that beauty itself, so that in the end he knows what beauty itself is" (211c). The Greek term used is γνῶ, *gno*, a form of the verb meaning

to know, recognize or realize, and for this reason, as the beautiful is an object of knowledge, Cobb claims that it does not go beyond human understanding (Cobb pp. 77-78).

Cobb (p. 79) thinks that the misunderstanding of the verb *theasthai* leads to the view of “a transcendent reality and a life of withdrawal from the world in mystical contemplation.” *Theasthai*, normally translated as “to contemplate”, Cobb retranslates as “to study” as it is used in 211d (“To contemplate the beautiful life”) which he says is a rational activity not involving religious awe. He cites *theasthai* to contemplate/study laws and traditions at 210c; *theasthai* with regard to contemplating the beauty of handsome boys (211d), and *theasthai* in terms of watching Socrates at Delios (220e, 221a), and in Aristophanes’ speech 190e concerning the circular people’s ability to look at their own scar. From this Cobb concludes that neither the forms nor the “mystical” experience of them transcend reason and speech, *logos* (Cobb p. 80).

Friedlander might be argued to support the knowability of beauty when he writes, “The pronouncements of the priestess could not be the end of the work. There had to be a concluding part in which the ascent to the heights would be depicted in the reality of actual life. The *Symposium* reaches its climax in the episode involving Alcibiades” (*Plato*, vol. 3, p. 28). In noting the importance of virtues in application to actual life as the climax, similar to the philosopher king going back down into the cave in *Republic* 519d, Friedlander indicates that the ascent is within the world, or at least involves a return to the world.

In contrast to this view that the form of beauty is knowable, Vlastos (*Socrates, Ironist and Philosopher*, 72ff.) reads the passage (210e) (like Aristotle *Metaphysics* XIII. 1078b9-32, 1086a37-b5) as being radically transcendent and hence not directly accessible from within this world. Thinkers, such as Bury, by affirming that Plato is discussing a religious mysticism that focuses on the transcendent, divine reality, conceive of the beautiful as unknowable. A. E. Taylor (pp. 230-1) believes the vision of the beautiful is beyond being, reached through going beyond science, and cannot be communicated or rationalized. “Science here passes in the end into ‘direct contact,’ or, as the school men say, ‘vision,’ an apprehension of an object which is no longer ‘knowing about’ it, knowing propositions which can be predicated of it, but actual possession of and being possessed by it. In the *Republic*, as in the *Symposium*, the thought is conveyed by language borrowed from the ‘holy marriage’ of popular religion and its survivals in mystery cults. Here it is ‘Beauty’ to which the soul is mated; in the *Republic* it is that good which, though the cause of all being and all goodness, is itself ‘on the other side of being’ (*Republic*, 508b)”. Guthrie (“Plato, The Man and his Dialogues”, p. 392) supports this position when he writes, “Philosophical reasoning must precede its apprehension, which however is an instantaneous act of mental vision transcending thought, just as it is not itself a thought or knowledge”.

This understanding of the good and beautiful as being beyond being ultimately points forward into Neo-Platonism. Watson (p. 24) writes that “the famous sentence, and the phrase *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond being, was taken by some thinkers as applied directly to God, not just the good, by Plato, and was seized on eagerly by those who wished to emphasize God’s transcendence”. If the revelation of the beautiful and good had no transcendental property, it perhaps would have been more difficult to appropriate it in this way, since they are clearly distinct from the notion of God (pp. 24-25). This reading of beyond being seems to resemble Plotinus’ movement from intellect (*Enneads* 6.9.4) to the One (*Enneads* 6.9.10); however the forms are subordinated to the One (A. E. Taylor, p. 232), seemingly relegated to the intellect. Therefore it can be argued that as this “‘knowledge about’ is only preparatory to a direct *scientia visionis*....Socrates reveals the fundamental agreement of his conception with that of the great mystics of all ages”. (A. E. Taylor, p. 231)

This position of beauty going beyond being assumes that beauty and the good are interchangeable. The good “is identical with the beautiful--an identification axiomatic for Plato, first stated in this dialogue by Agathon (197c, 201c, 204d-e)”, according to Markus (p. 224). Cornford (“The Doctrine of *Eros*”, p. 122) also assimilates the two. For A. E. Taylor (p. 231), noting the identity of *kalos* and *agathos* discussed in the dialogue, states that the good in the *Republic* and the αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν (*auto to kalon*) in the *Symposium* are absolutely identical, as are their ascents to “being and reality”. Singer (p. 59) supports this stating that “This is the Good or the Beautiful, absolute goodness and absolute beauty, the highest of the forms, the pinnacle of being, the ultimate category in terms of which all other realities are to be explained.” Guthrie (“Plato, The Man and his Dialogues”, p. 392) agrees with the view but specifying that at 204e they are interchangeable, and that Plato commonly equates them “though not always fairly”, at which he refers the

indispensable for the initiate to “[give] birth in beauty whether in body or in soul” (206b8-9, also 206e), which is procreation (*tiktein*) in order to achieve if possible the ultimate object of *eros* which is immortality. The initiate procreates “true virtue” (212a) as a result of this vision, so vision and begetting are here indissolubly connected and the

reader to *Lysis* 216d, *Protagoras* 360b, *Timaeus* 87c, *Meno* 77b. (Also see Moravcsik, “Reason and Eros” p. 295 for a different view.) Ferrari (“Platonic Love, p. 260), however, most convincingly, proposes that “in view of such passages as 201c and *Phaedrus* 250c-d, let us say that the Beautiful is thought of as the quality by which the Good shines and shows itself to us. We can then claim that the ascent to the Beautiful itself is indeed also an ascent to the Good itself, but described so as to bring out at every turn what it is about the good that captivates us”, which seems to validate Singer’s analysis (p. 55) that the ascent involves attraction which is aesthetic rather than sexual.

In contrast Santas (p. 41), opposing this linking, states, “I take the ladder of love to be about *eros* proper rather than generic *eros*”, the beautiful rather than the good. “But as *eros* proper, the love of beauty, is a part or species of generic *eros*, the love of the good, we should expect to find some relation between beauty and the good...This relation has an important bearing on our main question about criteria for ranking” (Santas, p. 41). He concludes (p. 47) that the distinction between specific and generic shows a difference between beauty and goodness, though admits it is unclear. Dodds in his commentary on the *Gorgias* accomplishes this more effectively, showing the lack of identity between beauty and goodness.

It is necessary to ask how the form of the good relates to the form of the beautiful particularly as each, whether in the ascent to the beautiful in the *Symposium* or the good in the *Republic*, is posited as an unmoved mover (the origin of being and the ‘thing in itself,’ the ‘real’), of which, it could be argued, there could not be a plurality. In Greek *kalos* means beautiful, noble, fine and stands in opposition to *aischros* meaning ugly or base. These are distinct from *agathos* meaning good, useful and beneficial, which opposes *kakos* or bad. This distinction in word signifies a difference in values, in contemporary terms the aesthetic as contrasted with the moral. Although the good and the beautiful regularly appear side by side, particularly in the pursuit of *eudaimonia* (*Symposium*, 201c), their distinction represents a potential conflict in values by the time of Plato, which is not fully resolved within the Socratic dialogues. These two ascents culminate in what, given this contrast, appear to be different goals, so the possibility of harmonizing the concepts becomes pressing. It is important to note how the actual end of desire is not entirely resolved in Platonism. What, however, is significant in this section of the *Symposium* is that the ascent to the beautiful describes an ascent which often seems to blend with the ascent to the good, so that at times the two appear interchangeable, and that the means of intellectual ascent is *eros*, rendering understanding and *eros* inseparable.

The distinction of being and beyond being, knowing and beyond knowledge, influences the understanding of *agathos* (good) and *kakos* (evil) which Plato endorses. Plato views *agathos* as limited and determined while *kakos* is indeterminate and limitless. If the beautiful is beyond knowledge and therefore being, it is limitless and undetermined and therefore evil (the good, it seems, must be knowable in order to be good). However as the good and beautiful are inseparable, this point seems to violate *Symposium* 211a6-7 in which the beautiful seems to be called unknowable in that it is not knowledge, unless to be knowledge essentially and to be knowable are different things. If this latter hypothesis be allowed then although the beautiful is knowable in that it is good, it is not knowledge. If not, then we find ourselves in an *aporia* formulated through the contrast of *agathos* versus *kakos* and limited versus limitless, in which the limited is equated with *kakos* and the unlimited with *agathos*, which undermines Plato’s normal use of the terms. This contradiction is the site of an interminable debate which when considered in relation to our past discussion of poverty and *aporiai*, points to the understanding that the beautiful is in the realm of the unknowable. Faced with the ambiguity of this problem with regard to the beautiful and the good, Socrates acknowledges his poverty, his lack of knowledge and inability to understand except negatively, while Alcibiades, as if recognizing the difficulty, uncertainty and perhaps unanswerability of the problem, turns away from the *αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν*, focusing on his involvement in the material world, therefore prioritizing concrete physical beauty over immaterial intellectual beauty.

object of the vision may be considered a transitional object of *eros* in its own right.³ Alcibiades, the ideally beautiful man who in his beauty partakes of the form of the beautiful (211b1) and therefore is the reflection of the form, the appearance of beauty rather than beauty itself, is finite (211b2-3). Further, this shift between 210e-212c in itself indicates a movement from the pinnacle of the ascent of Diotima's speech to its lowest rung represented by Alcibiades. Beauty as described by Diotima is reflected as by a mirror in the ideally beautiful man, a material reflection of the beautiful.

This difference in object denotes a difference in *eros* because *eros*, though always the same, is manifested differently depending upon its object (Cornford, "The Doctrine of *Eros*", p. 121). The *eros* behind the ascent to the good and the beautiful seeking immortality through procreation of virtue is clearly an *eros* of the *ψυχή* (*psyche*, soul) being directed towards a non-finite object. The *eros* associated with Alcibiades is an appetitive desire directed towards the *σῶμα* (*soma*), the finite body of his beautiful person (210a9), or in the case of Alcibiades towards Socrates' body and soul (Kierkegaard, *Concept*, p. 218; Alcibiades loves Socrates' soul but is limited to the appetitive in his means of expression thereby showing himself a slave to the body).⁴ This can be seen as the opposition of the *poros*-dominant heavenly Aphrodite (181c) to *penia*-dominant earthly Aphrodite (180d7-e2 with Pausanias; redefined in 186a2 by Eryximachus).

Sayre (p. 120) suggestively interprets the juxtaposition of the effects of *eros* in terms of Plato's effort "to dramatize the vast disparity between the philosopher's love of Beauty and the love of power and wealth that motivated the political life of Athens during this stage in its history". The celebration banquet for Agathon's prize occurred

³ While Barker (Personal Communication, 2002) notes that the form of the beautiful is not the ultimate object of love, Beauty nevertheless stirs the individual "transmuting the physical excitement into imaginative and intellectual energy" (Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love", pp. 22-3) until he reaches the form of the beautiful. The individual sensitive to beauty "substitutes forms of erotic response" and is erotically drawn towards the forms (Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love", p. 26). Vlastos stresses this when he notes that in the *Timaeus* neither people nor the gods "stir awe or love...while the severely impersonal Ideas evoke both, especially love, so much so that he speaks repeatedly of communion with them as an act of blissful and fertile conjugal union" (Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love", p. 26), showing passionate desire directed towards principles (Watson, pp. 24-5) rather than people.

Later in Neo-Platonic thought the Good, which in a sense is the coming together of the good, the beautiful and the true, will be perceived as the ultimate object of *eros*, though for Plato it is immortality through the procreation in body and soul which is the *telos* of *eros*.

⁴ Guthrie, "Plato, the Man and his Dialogues", p. 395.

when Athens militarily was at its height prior to the hubristic self-serving military expedition to control Syracuse.⁵ A. E. Taylor notes that Apollodorus' narration is dated several years after Agathon had left Athens (see 172c), which places it close to the disastrous defeat of Athens that ended the Peloponnesian War" (see Taylor, p. 210, 520). As Sayre remarks,

It could hardly be an accident that the time of Agathon's party itself and the time of Apollodorus' subsequent retelling of the event respectively mark off almost exactly the period during which Athens slipped from its position of cultural and military supremacy in the northern Mediterranean to that of a ruined *polis* on its knees before a victorious Sparta. Nor can it be an accident that the character who interrupts the party with his boisterous revelry was a recently elected young general destined to play a major part in the events that brought Athens to this ignominious position. (Sayre, p. 120)

In reaction to accusations concerning the mutilation of the Hermae, to avoid standing trial, Alcibiades defected to Sparta, after which Athens lost its fleet at Syracuse, finally resulting in the surrender of Athens to Sparta in 404 B.C. In the *Symposium* Alcibiades' role is not specifically intended by Plato to demonstrate Athen's political failure and fortunes in war as resulting from the improper uses of *eros* in the polis, a position held by Sayre (pp. 121-2).⁶ Alcibiades rather represents the obsessive pursuit of an appetitive form of *eros* directed towards pleasure "self-serving gratification, and power" which proved disastrous for him personally and for Athens consequentially (Barker, Personal Communication, 2003).⁷ Alcibiades' uncontrolled *eros* is contrasted with the philosophical *eros* of *Symposium* 212 directed towards true virtue and therefore wisdom, the latter form of *eros* being little tolerated within the polis.⁸ Thus the juxtaposition of the *auto to kalon* and Alcibiades highlights the two potentialities of *eros* as being either intellectual or appetitive, each having distinct consequences. *Eros* directed towards the

⁵ A. E. Taylor, p. 519.

⁶ Nussbaum appears to be greatly indebted to this reading of *eros* in her discussion of the recantation in the *Phaedrus*, in *Fragility of Goodness* (1986), though she makes no reference to Sayre's *Plato's Literary Garden* (1928) in her bibliography.

⁷ Barker holds that the *Symposium* is primarily focused upon "the ways in which the pursuit of various kinds of *eros* affects the lives of individuals".

⁸ This lack of tolerance is further demonstrated by the polis' intolerance of Socrates and eventually his execution "only a few years after the dramatic date of Apollodorus' narration" (Sayre, p. 121). This reading can be seen to support A. E. Taylor's position that the *Symposium* was written to disprove accusations made against Socrates, with respect to his involvement with Alcibiades, for corrupting the youth.

intellectual object, heavenly Aphrodite, is constructive, while uncontrolled earthly Aphrodite is destructive.⁹

B. SECOND LEVEL: SEEN THROUGH THE SYMBOLIC, THE DIONYSIAN AND THE APOLLONIAN

The juxtaposition of the beautiful of Diotima's speech with Alcibiades is further complexified through Alcibiades' representation of Socrates as the *eros* directed towards the beautiful of Diotima's speech. This indicates that the *eros* of Diotima's speech has crossed over into Alcibiades' speech and become embodied in Socrates so that the interaction between Socrates and Alcibiades is that of two conflicting types of *eros*. This results in their difficulty in communication in establishing a common language; Socrates tries to lead Alcibiades to the good directly while Alcibiades is trying physically to seduce Socrates in order to learn what Socrates knows.

This difficulty in communication is shown through the movement between the two speeches, with regard to the Dionysian/Apollonian elements.¹⁰ Alcibiades seems to represent Bacchus¹¹ physically, standing "in the doorway, with a mass of ribbons and an

⁹ This opposition precedes the subtlety of the development of the image of the charioteer and his horses as representing the soul in *Phaedrus* 253c7-256e2, which can be argued implicitly to incorporate the reforming of Alcibiades.

¹⁰ Within Greek culture a polarity between the Apollonian and Dionysian exists, the Apollonian which was typically Greek involving the "rational and civilized" (Hall, p. 25) "well-formed personality" (Burkert, p. 162), versus the irrational frenzy of the Dionysian, which involves the surrender of personal identity. (Burkert, p. 162) For a highly influential account of this relation, see Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

¹¹ Bacchus relates to both the votary and the god Dionysos. ("The merging of god and votary which occurs in this metamorphosis is without parallel in the rest of Greek religion"; Burkert, p. 162; also p. 163.) "The god alone is called Dionysos; *bakcheia* denotes the frenzy" (Burkert, p. 412). Though commonly called the "god of wine and of intoxicated ecstasy, intoxication [denotes]...a change in consciousness...interpreted as the interruption of something divine". The experience of Dionysus extends beyond or may be entirely distinct from drunkenness. "Madness becomes an end in itself. *Mania*, the Greek word, denotes frenzy, not as the ravings of delusion, but...as an experience of intensified mental power." It is an infectious group phenomenon and results in the abandoning of one's individual identity into the madness, which is considered "divine and wholesome" (Burkert, pp. 161-2).

"A challenge to the established order" (A. Henrichs, in Hornblower and Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 479), Dionysos' cults were violent and disturbing involving drunkenness, orgies, and acts of violence, suggestive at times of cannibalism. Chased by Dionysos, women left their looms in divine frenzy running into the mountains and dismembering animals such as fawns as a ritual sacrifice. See Euripides' *Bacchae* for where the King Pentheus is torn apart by the maenads and his mother (Burkert, p.165). The drinking of the wine in the Anthesteria festival may have secretly alluded to "the death of the god himself...the association of wine and blood, with wine being described as the blood of the vine"

enormous wreath of ivy and violets¹² sprouting on his head” (*Symposium* 212d4-e1; trans. Joyce). This is further implied by his drunken frenzy,¹³ disorderly comportment¹⁴ and epitomized by his passionate uncontrolled obsession with and adoration of Socrates. This is contrasted with the more Apollonian representation of the pursuit of the beautiful in the ascent of Diotima which is demonstrated by Socrates as the lover of wisdom who seeks at bottom a pure intellectual relationship with Alcibiades. Apollo is, according to Greek mythology, the “revealer of the truth” and the healer and “cleaner of the soul,”¹⁵ Socrates’ preferred or “patron” god.¹⁶ Apollo relates more closely than Dionysus to the priorities of Diotima’s ascent which seeks to enlighten the soul, as does Socrates.¹⁷

(Burkert, p. 164). Hall (p. 37) believes that the tearing of the animal to pieces and the eating of its raw flesh are “a symbolic eating of the god himself”.

¹² Both Aphrodite and the Muses have crowns of violets and violets are also symbols of Athens. Ivy, “symbolizing immortality” (Hall, p. 163), is associated with Dionysus the only god who dies and is reborn, and his maenads and satyrs (Burkert, p. 166).

¹³ While Dionysos in this period is not drunk, and is often represented as entirely unfrenzied standing in the midst of drunken Bacchae, frenzied male and female votaries, satyrs, maenads or thyiades, Burkert states that “the madness of the frenzied god himself can be traced to the anger of Hera. Hera represents the normal order of the polis—the inversion of this order is her anger” articulated by the full nature of Dionysos (Burkert, p. 165).

¹⁴ This is exemplified through the accusation against Alcibiades that the night before the fleet set sail for Syracuse he, along with Phaedrus and Eryximachus, “profaned the mysteries” (through doing a mock performance of the rites in a “private house” (Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, ch. 28) and “mutilated the Hermae” (which were pillars with *prosopa* (faces)) and *phalli*, household gods and boundary markers. The *prosopa* were mutilated and most probably the *phalli*, though not mentioned. (Thucydides, ch. 27).

¹⁵ Apollo is Ἄπλοῦς, *Haplous*, “the speaker of truth. As purifier of the soul by means of mantic fumigations, washing, and aspersion (καθαρτικῶς) and of the body by healing medicines (ἰατρικῶς, he is the god who washes away (ἀπολούων) and delivers (ἀπολυῶν) from evil.” (Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae*, p. 88; also see Fritz Graf, in Hornblower and Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 122) Apollo is *Apolouon*, ἀπολούων, meaning he who heals, “washes away.” As the “god of healing....Apollo the Helper, Epikourios, [also] accorded the epithet Doctor, *Iatros*” (Burkert, p. 147), is god of purifications and cryptic oracles. “With disease and bane, *nosos* in the widest sense, being interpreted as pollution, the bane is not personified, but objectified; knowledge and personal responsibility come into play: the person must discover the action which has brought about pollution and must eliminate the *miasma* through renewed action. This, of course requires super-human knowledge: the god of purifications must also be an oracle god”. (Burkert, p. 147) As the revealer of truth, this explains why along with his infinite superiority, as “something absolute”, from the “fifth century onward Apollo began to be understood as a sun god”. (Burkert, p. 149) Apollo is also leader of the Muses, *Mousagetes*. A statue of Apollo on Delos has in the right hand the Graces and in the left the bow (arrows in the *Iliad* “signify pestilence: the god of healing is also the god of plague”; Burkert, p. 145). According to Callimachus this signifies that “the favour of the god is prior and stronger than the destructive power” (Burkert, p. 146).

¹⁶ Socrates dedicated himself to Apollo (*Apology* 20e4-22b2, Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, p. 38) and because of his hard service to Apollo rendered himself poor (*Apology*, 33a).

¹⁷ This is not a direct correlation involving classical Greek theology, but only concerning the symbolic value ultimately pointing towards the opposition of *sophrosune* and *mania*.

However, Alcibiades opens his speech by comparing Socrates to a statue of Silenus, a companion of Dionysus, father of the satyrs who carries “pipes or flutes”¹⁸ (215b2) as well as the satyr Marsyas (215b11-c9). Satyrs were horned with hairy legs, hooves, tails and were “supposed to be hybrid creatures combining the mentality of humans with the sexual appetites of beasts and were typically depicted with oversized and characteristically tumid male organs.”¹⁹ When Alcibiades goes on to point out that Socrates cannot object to the comparison, because in fact he resembles a satyr, one is reminded of the remark to the same effect in Xenophon’s *Symposium* (iv.19).²⁰ This, however, misrepresents Socrates as we shall see, particularly given that in *Republic* 399d-e he says “we are not innovating...in preferring Apollo and the instruments of Apollo to Marsyas and his instruments”.

It would appear that Alcibiades’ arrival dressed as Bacchus, and subsequent comparison of Socrates to a satyr and to Marsyas, have several implications. Socrates resembles Marsyas making melodies with the “power to possess and so reveal those people who are ready for the god and his mysteries” (215c5-7) without instruments but with words. Nonetheless simultaneously as Marsyas is a creature punished by Apollo for *hubris*,²¹ Alcibiades may be implying (perhaps in jest) that Socrates through his words is competing with Apollo and through this pride is guilty of *hubris*. Alcibiades asks the listeners to “sit in judgment of Socrates’ amazing arrogance and pride” (219c7-8), because he “turned [Alcibiades] down” (219c5), suggesting that Socrates had committed

¹⁸ According to Nehamas (p. 65) an *aulos* is a reed instrument, not actually a flute, which was “held by the ancients to be the instrument that most strongly aroused the emotions”. As Alcibiades says that Socrates’ words have the same effect as Marsyas’ music, he implies that Socrates has the power to arouse the strongest emotions. See West, *Ancient Greek Music*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁹ Satyrs and silenoi are “imaginary male inhabitants of the wild...with some animal features, unrestrained in their desire for sex and wine, and generally represented naked.... the ambiguity of the satyrs as grotesque hedonists and yet the immortal companions of a god, cruder than men and yet somewhat wiser, combining mischief with wisdom, lewdness with skill in music, animality with divinity” (Richard Seaford, in Hornblower and Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 1361). This ambiguity is reflected in Dionysos whom they follow, who was “perceived as both man and animal, male and effeminate, young and old; he is the most versatile and elusive of all Greek gods” (A. Henrichs, in Hornblower and Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 479).

²⁰ Sayre, p. 122; also see Nehamas p. 65 which describes satyrs as having “horses’ tails or ears, sometimes the traits of goats” (also see Hall, p. 274; as a costume see Burkert, p. 104 and 166), this sheds some light on the figuring of Bottom in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*.

²¹ Nehamas (65) states that “Classical tradition did not clearly distinguish between a satyr and a silenoi. Marsyas, in myth, was a satyr who dared compete in music with Apollo and was skinned alive for his impudence.” See Diodorus Siculus III. 59, Apollodorus I.4, and Hall, p. 273.

a crime against his beauty in refusing him and, as beauty is of divine origin, it is as if Socrates had committed a crime against the gods.²² While leaving Alcibiades somewhat bewildered, Alcibiades seems to hope that Socrates will ultimately succumb to his desire, suggesting that the undermining of the Dionysian by the Apollonian is to be countered by Alcibiades' effort to seduce Socrates yet again, the Dionysian undermining the Apollonian.

However while Bacchus and Marsyas are friends, Alcibiades through this use of terminology shows early on that he sees Socrates as his friend/kin, but only according to his own particularly self-centred understanding of friendship, a utilitarian notion in which he wishes to exchange his body for Socrates' *logoi* and understanding. This notion undercuts the ethics implicit in Socrates' philosophical *logoi* showing how little Alcibiades, coming from the Dionysian framework, understands them and Socrates' intentions. Nonetheless, that Alcibiades is drawn to Socrates specifically because of what is hidden within him, the "godlike" precious figures (216e7-217a2) which as *logoi* are Apollonian, is of consequence because he realizes that they render his Dionysian mindset futile and his life meaningless, which creates a tension in Alcibiades' feeling towards Socrates. Thus through the imagery of Dionysus and Apollo, Plato displays a partial inability by Alcibiades to understand Socrates in tension with an appreciation of Socrates and his *logoi*.

However, this difficulty in communication is not the fault of Alcibiades alone, but likewise may also involve Socrates' mode of communication. Alcibiades' comparison of Socrates to a satyr may be symptomatic of a deeper problem. Sayre puts it rather strongly: "Socrates' physical appearance may not have been ideal for the role of a teacher. Not only was his physical presence unduly distracting to young men like Alcibiades and Charmides, but he actually made a point of leading them on with his banter about being attracted to handsome young men" (Sayre, p. 123). Following this line of thought, Alcibiades seems initially to have taken seriously Socrates' "overt teasing"

²² Alcibiades accused Socrates of "insolence (*hubrisen*: 219c5) and arrogance (*huperephanes*: 219c7), properties that notoriously characterized Alcibiades himself" (Sayre, p. 124). Nehamas (p. 66), noting *hubristes* means vile, states "In sexual contexts the word would normally be used of one who sexually abuses another, but Alcibiades here accuses Socrates of a different sort of abuse, as at 222a, where the point is that Socrates has mocked at Alcibiades' beauty". Clearly Alcibiades associates beauty with sexuality and partially feels deceived by Socrates because of the means by which Socrates teased and misled him.

about being “erotically disposed to beautiful boys (216d2-3) and, since [Alcibiades] considered himself to be exceptionally beautiful, he thought it only natural that Socrates might want” to seduce him, as would a satyr, which he physically appeared to be. Alcibiades proceeds to give Socrates every opportunity (217c3, 217c8, 219c1), to no avail (219d1-2). However given that “this kind of flirting is entirely absent in the interaction between Diotima and Socrates” which demonstrates a more successful example of philosophical instruction, we receive our first overt hint that this type of flirting may be counterproductive, both distracting and blocking the student from the pursuit of philosophical truths. (Sayre, pp. 122-4)²³

This tension between Alcibiades’ view of Socrates’ satyr-like appearance and his recognition of the philosophical *logoi* he possesses within, indicates that though he physically appears and acts Dionysian he is actually Apollonian/rational in orientation. Given this conflict of inner and outer, Sayre inquires as to whether Socrates is able “to lead others along the path to wisdom” (Sayre, p. 124).²⁴ Considering *Eros* is a lover of wisdom (203d7), he has no share in “good and beautiful things” (202d4-5). Socrates, who is equated with *Eros* in the *Symposium*, does not yet in full possess the beautiful and good. Sayre ties this to Diotima’s doubt as to whether Socrates is capable of understanding the higher mysteries, (210a2)²⁵ for if Socrates had not had the revelation of

²³ Sayre maintains that Alcibiades discusses Socrates’ production of images of beauty rather than true beauty because the “dynamics of his emotional interaction with Alcibiades prevent Socrates’ true virtue from being displayed” (Sayre, p. 124). This reading however appears questionable when it is noted that Alcibiades specifically introduces his comparison of Socrates with Marsyas by stating “I’ll try to praise Socrates, my friends, but I’ll have to use an image” (215a5-6). This conscious use of an image is reminiscent of Socrates’ discussion of the nature of the soul in *Phaedrus* (246a4-5) when he states “most assuredly a god alone could tell it, but what it resembles, that a man might tell”. This suggests (if we may use the *Phaedrus* as an indicator of Plato’s conception of Socrates’ procedures) that Alcibiades, following Socrates’ method (which he understands at a far deeper level than many are willing to admit though clearly he resists) of using images to describe that which exceeds human understanding and description, is simply honouring/idolizing Socrates, indicating the way Socrates would speak of the forms or the soul, that which goes beyond his understanding.

²⁴ “Whereas Diotima is represented as the ideal teacher of philosophy, Socrates is portrayed as notably deficient in the traits needed to guide a student along the pathway to wisdom.” Sayre resolves the difficulty by concluding that Socrates is not represented as a guide/teacher to philosophy but as a personification of *eros*. He is “instead the paradigm of the love of wisdom [as the son of poverty, *Eros* “falls short of wisdom”] which inspires one to follow the path set by Diotima” (Sayre, pp. 126-7), and pursue wisdom (Sayre, pp. 128-9) while having no wisdom himself.

²⁵ This interpretation stands in opposition to the majority of classical and contemporary scholars who hold that Socrates is portrayed as having seen the beautiful. Both A. E. Taylor and Guthrie believe that Socrates saw the vision of *auto to kalon*, after which he has “bearing as being not of their world though he is in it”. (Taylor, p. 232) A. E. Taylor (p. 229) believed that Diotima’s uncertainty shows that “Plato here is guilty of

the beautiful, Sayre feels Socrates can not successfully lead others (Sayre, pp. 124-5), as he might be seen as being in the realm of true opinion.²⁶ This position Sayre supports through the apparent irony of Socrates' claim of ignorance (*Theaetetus*, 150c4) under which he believes there is a "core of truth" indicating for Sayre that "in Plato's view at least, Socrates was arrested at the third level of Diotima's philosophical ascent" (Sayre, p. 125). On this view, not only is Socrates unable to lead others because of his mixed nature of having the outward appearance and comportment of a satyr while generating philosophical and therefore "Apollonian" *logoi*, but also, and unconnectedly, because he himself may not have reached the vision of *auto to kalon*, so does not know except through true opinion where he is leading the youths and therefore possesses no knowledge to teach them.

However, for Plato there is a distinction between the revelation of the beautiful and ultimately possessing beauty and goodness, the first being the domain of the philosopher and the latter that of a god. Given, as we have noted before, that the vision changes the initiate and causes him to bring forth true virtue, the full vision seems inseparable from true virtue.²⁷ While the inquiry into whether Socrates saw the vision is ultimately speculative, Sayre through demanding that a guide possess full knowledge eliminates everyone from being guides in philosophy. As no mortal has perfect wisdom, Socrates lacks the full possession of the beautiful and good. This does not mean that Socrates can not guide a "student" like Alcibiades towards the truth given that such a pursuit is dialectical, an interactive journey in pursuit of wisdom shared by individuals who each, as a philosopher, necessarily does not possess goodness and beauty. As, according to Barker (Personal Communication, 2002), Socrates "knows the shape of the

the arrogance of professing that he has reached philosophical heights to which the 'historical' Socrates could not ascend". Cornford ("The Doctrine of *Eros*," p. 129) partially supports him saying "Plato might mean that his own philosophy, centered in another world, lay beyond the explicit doctrine of his master, though it might be implicit in his life and practice". (Also see Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 69) Contemporary commentators do not support Taylor and Cornford in thinking Plato's Socrates is historically accurate.

²⁶ True opinion: "Judging things correctly without being able to give a reason. Surely you see that this is not the same as knowing—for how could knowledge be unreasoning? And it's not ignorance either—for how could what hits the truth be ignorance? Correct judgement, of course, has this character: it is in between understanding and ignorance." (202a7-12) Regardless of how close to full resource/possession of the beautiful and the good an individual may be, the presence of any lack of understanding exemplifies *aporos*, and hence liability to *aporia*, between ignorance and knowledge.

²⁷ *Republic* 7: 531d-4d also suggests that "vision" is not the final resting place; yet as it is necessary for the initiate to beget true virtue, the two are inseparable.

route” and is more advanced on the path than Alcibiades, his help would prove invaluable if fully understood and accepted.

Taken overall in terms of a symbolic reading, it would appear the difficulty to communicate at the linguistic level occurs in both directions. On one side Alcibiades, misreading Socrates through Alcibiades’ Dionysian field of reference, adopts a comportment with Socrates which conflicts with what he desires from Socrates, his Apollonian *logoi*, showing that he does not fully understand him or his *logoi* and as a result of this comportment makes Socrates flee. From *Symposium* 213D (trans. Joyce) when Socrates says “I shudder at his madness and passion for love”, we see that Alcibiades does not change his strategy which would have enabled him to draw closer to gain better access to that which he desires, Socrates’ inner *logoi* and understanding by which he hopes to become a better person. This appears to be because he is incipiently aware that if he accepts these *logoi* and applies them they will fully undermine and subvert the Dionysian life of pleasure, the Dionysian not being an end in itself concerning virtue for Plato. For this reason, unwilling to let go of either, Alcibiades remains Dionysian fleeing Socrates while remaining fixated upon him.

On the other side, regardless of Socrates’ considerable effort to guide Alcibiades, evident in *First Alcibiades* and in his insistence upon maintaining purity in their relationship, at times Socrates wore the mask of a satyr and used the Dionysian symbolic language in order to attract the “initiates of Dionysus” and lead/convert them to philosophy, the Apollonian practice of reason. In so doing he appears to have confused Alcibiades by giving him mixed signals (for its consequences see 213c8-213d9) distracting him from pursuing purely philosophical ends by encouraging the Dionysian side, and thereby increasing and perpetuating an inner struggle and tension, which draws into question whether this mixture of conflicting languages is the most effective method for leading someone to full wisdom. Taking this into account, the complex symbol structure of this part of the dialogue points to the inference that the difficulty in communication lies both on the side of Alcibiades and of Socrates.

C. THIRD LEVEL: SEEN THROUGH THE CONCEPTUAL CONCERNING LOVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In order to understand this difficulty in communication in Apollonian terms, and reach a conceptual understanding of the juxtaposition of these opposing figures, we must examine more deeply the actual relation of Alcibiades and Socrates through their conceptions of *eros* and the light this throws on their visions of each other. In Chapter II, we showed how Socrates is the embodiment of the Plato of the *Symposium*'s conception of *Eros*, which is a philosophical love directed towards universal intellectual objects, the forms, in view of begetting virtue to reach if possible immortality. Socrates' personifying of Diotima's notion of *eros*, the union of *poros* and *penia*, becomes in Alcibiades' speech the beloved of Alcibiades demonstrating his inability to distinguish love from the beloved, showing that he missed Socrates' speech.²⁸ Alcibiades according to Nussbaum, Markus and others, seems to exemplify passionate love, directed towards the particular beloved as a unique object of love: "This is the love which Socrates finds a burden (213c-d)--which conforms most precisely to the literal meaning of *eros* and its analysis by Aristophanes" (Markus, pp. 227-8). Aristophanes' understanding of love, of course, is the "longing for and following after that primeval wholeness" (*Symposium* 193a2-3; trans. Joyce), achieved through an "utter oneness with the beloved" (*Symposium* 192e8-9; trans. Joyce). However, the contrast of the climax of Socrates' speech with the entrance of Alcibiades opposes the desired universal form of the beautiful with Alcibiades' erotic pursuit of a particular instantiation of earthly beauty, though his infatuation with the not physically beautiful Socrates who is the lover of wisdom shows this dichotomy not to be straightforward.

i. Vlastos' and Nussbaum's Critique of Plato's Love of the Individual

Vlastos in "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato" put forward a major critique of Plato's view of love, that the individual is loved not for himself but as a means

²⁸ This shift seems paradoxical: How can *Eros* who is poor find himself continually surfacing as the beloved? This paradox will be analyzed in the next chapter through Kierkegaard's analysis of irony, which can be seen as showing the coherent linkage of poverty and irony.

to the end of the beautiful; analogous concerns can be found elsewhere.²⁹ The individual is not loved as a person but as a conglomeration of qualities, in so far as they participate in the beautiful and the good (Singer, pp. 72, 87; Vlastos pp. 28-9, 31). As each thing is loved for something else, there is an infinite regress to the only true object of love, the good (*Gorgias* 467c5-468c7), which alone can be loved for its own sake or as an end in itself, showing that (in the terms provided by the *Symposium*) all things are loved as means to the end of the form of the beautiful. Thus for Vlastos, Plato's love does not focus upon an individual's concern and love for the specific individual but only in so far as the individual is useful and beautiful, "good producing" with use-value. For this reason Vlastos (p. 8), Osborne (p. 102) and Santas (p. 42), believe Platonic love is selfish, motivated by self-interest. Furthermore Vlastos argues that as

all too few human beings are masterworks of excellence, and not even the best of those we have the chance to love are wholly free of streaks of the ugly, the mean, the commonplace, the ridiculous; if our love for them is to be only for their virtue and beauty, the individual, in the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality, will never be the object of love.

This represents for Vlastos "the cardinal flaw in Plato's theory";³⁰ that "the high climactic moment of fulfillment—the peak achievement for which all lesser loves are to be 'used as steps'—is the one farthest removed from affection for concrete human beings" (Vlastos, pp. 31-2). Vlastos believes Plato's philosophy demonstrates a fundamental selfishness and incomprehension of the importance of human relations and how to love.³¹

Nussbaum reads this into her interpretation of Alcibiades and Socrates believing

²⁹ See Cornford, "The Doctrine of *Eros*" p. 126: When *eros* is channelled towards one object it lessens its force towards other objects, and because *Eros* as the divine/daimon is directed towards the beautiful and the divine, rather than human experience (see Plotinus' *Enneads*), it is stripped away from the individual in its pursuit of the good. (*Republic* 485; Cornford, *Unwritten Philosophy*, p. 72; Guthrie, "Plato, the Man and his dialogues", p. 394).

³⁰ "It does not provide for the love of whole persons, but only for the love of that abstract version of persons which consists of the complex of their best qualities. This is the reason why personal affection ranks so low in Plato's *scala amoris*. When loved as congeries of valuable qualities, persons cannot compete with abstractions of universal significance, like schemes of social reform or scientific and philosophical truths, still less with the Idea of Beauty in its sublime transcendence, 'pure, clear, unmixed, not full of human flesh and color and other mortal nonsense' (*Symposium* 211e1-3)" (Vlastos, "The Individual as an Object of Love", pp. 31-2).

³¹ See also Kosman, p. 55; W. Price attacks the Vlastos/Nussbaum interpretation in *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 45-49 and in "Loving Persons Platonically", p. 25-34.

that Alcibiades' understanding of love is a passionate devotion to Socrates as a particular embodied human being as opposed to Socrates' conception of *eros* which focuses upon the "dry" (*Fragility*, p. 216) rational pursuit of the forms. She rehearses Vlastos' argument saying,

Despite our needy and mortal natures, we can transcend the merely personal in *eros* and ascend, through desire itself, to the good. But we are not yet persuaded that we can accept this vision of self-sufficiency and this model of practical understanding since, with Vlastos, we feel that they are omitting something. What they omit is now movingly displayed to us in the person and story of Alcibiades. We realize through him, the deep importance unique passion has for ordinary human beings; we see its irreplaceable contribution to understanding. (*Fragility*, p. 197)

According to her interpretation, Socrates as *sophrosune* represents a form of love aimed at the forms in which love of the individual is expendable and transferable while Alcibiades as *mania* exemplifies irrational and total devotion to an individual in his entirety. She concludes that these types of love represent "two mutually exclusive" visions which are incompatible and demand a choice.³²

ii. Applicable or Not?

Such an account facilitates reading the entrance of Alcibiades as follows: after Socrates has "been 'saved' by 'scanning beauty's wide horizon,' in walks the embodiment of a slavish and illiberal devotion to the individual loveliness of a single...man"—Alcibiades.³³ In order to understand this juxtaposition, we must turn back to the ascent in order to see how Socrates, the *exemplaire* of Platonic *eros*, figures as the initiate in his pursuit of the forms. In the description of the ascent to the beautiful, the initiate having fallen

³² This "story brings a further problem: it shows us clearly that we cannot simply add the love of Alcibiades to the ascent of Diotima; indeed, that we cannot have this love and the kind of stable rationality that she reveals to us. Socrates was serious when he spoke of two mutually exclusive visions... We see two kinds of value, two kinds of knowledge; and we see that we must choose. One sort of understanding blocks out the other. The pure light of the eternal form eclipses, or is eclipsed by, the flickering light of the opened and unstable moving body". (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, pp. 197-8)

³³ Nussbaum, *Fragility*, Ch. 6.

“in love with the beauty of one individual body. . . must³⁴ consider how nearly related (akin: *adelphon*, ἀδελφόν)³⁵ the beauty of any one body is to the beauty of any other, when he will see that if he is to devote himself to loveliness (beauty: *kalon*, καλόν) of form it will be absurd (quite ridiculous: *polle anoia*, πολλή ἄνοια) to deny that the beauty of each and every body is the same. Having reached this point, he must set himself to be the lover of every lovely body, and bring his passion for the one into due proportion by deeming it of little or of no importance (trivial of no account: *smikron*, σμικρόν)” (*Symposium* 210a-b, trans. Joyce; Dover translation of Greek words).

The initiate devotes himself to the loving of one particular body. In contemplating the relation to each other of particular instances of beauty, one loved as a unique instance compared with another likewise beautiful, though separate instances they are related in their beauty which establishes a kinship between the two, and makes them *adelpa*. If the initiate devotes himself to the pursuit of *kalon*, or as Dover (*Symposium*, p. 155) states “if beauty (sc. manifested) in appearance is to be pursued”, then the instances of beauty are

³⁴ It is unclear what type of mental process the “must” implies. Ferrari (“Platonic Love”, p. 257) notes the sense of obligation to visit the different stages through Plato’s use of *dei* (210a4) which translates as “must”. A. E. Taylor (p. 229) uses the expression “he must” even more strongly which implies an intention and determination by will rather than a natural progression. Guthrie (“Plato, the Man and his Dialogues”, p. 395) writes “the purification of *Eros* is achieved by conscious effort,” indicating that it is willful like *Republic* 516e5-6, though in the *Republic* Socrates describes another’s intention as the initiate is “dragged” from the cave. Here *Eros* as between good and evil becomes more godlike as *Eros* is capitalized. Guthrie expresses this in terms of the active groping, giving it an almost tactile quality. He writes, “the mind first becomes aware of the shared Forms in sets of particulars, then, discarding the senses, ascends ‘by itself’ to the grasp of higher (more universal) Forms.”

Guthrie (392) considers that “the progress from perception of particulars to apprehension of a form, which vividly describes a progress of Love, is equated with *anamnesis* at *Phaedrus* 249 b-c,” a statement which links the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, as well as assuming that they share a common idea of love, a position which Ferrari argues against in his paper “Platonic Love.” Though *anamnesis* is not directly referred to in the *Symposium*, this is not problematic with regard to Guthrie’s reading as he views the dialogues as interrelated and informing each other, so that for him it does not have to be directly referred to. For Guthrie, the mental process involves the intentional pulling forth of forgotten knowledge from a primordial existence through a dialectical relationship with another person; as *anamnesis* is by nature a blind venture, it explains the tactile quality of the language Guthrie uses.

Moravcsik (“Reason and *Eros*,” p. 285) is sensitive to the shifts in the text, dividing the phases of the ascent into steps of *eros*, reason and creativity, demonstrating in depth the reflective process of the ascent as a continuum, in contrast to Ferrari (“Platonic Love”, p. 257) who thinks that, though obliged, “we are not told how he makes the transitions.” Santas (pp. 41-2) following Moravcsik agrees that the steps of the ascent involve “cognitive, emotional, and creative” aspects though he complains that Moravcsik does not contextualize his findings. Furthermore, he specifies that “We should expect to find all the elements of *eros* proper at each step: a lover, the perception of an attracting beautiful object, the desire to beget offspring on the beautiful object, and the desire for immortality for the sake of which the begetting takes place,” though he thinks that this is not absolute as the lover does not create on all levels.

³⁵ Dover (*Symposium*, p. 155) suggests comparing this use of *adelphon* to *Republic* 402c.

recognized as being akin.³⁶ Beauty ceases to be recognized as multiple instances of *kalon* because the initiate's intellect recognizes them as one, unifies them, as through focusing uniquely upon what is shared, the beauty of their bodies, their differences drop away, so that the love for the beautiful bodies becomes transferable, not attached to the particular but to beautiful bodies in general. Thus the importance of the particular beauty of a unique individual's body is disregarded or minimized in favour of the more general category of beauty. Through disregarding the infinite variations of what is beautiful in an individual body, in favour of an integrated understanding of physical beauty, Diotima moves beyond/transcends the idea of love focused upon the unique individual body. Then going a step further the initiate proceeds

“to grasp that the beauties of the body are as nothing to the beauties of the soul, so that wherever he meets with spiritual loveliness, even in the husk of an unlovely body, he will find it beautiful enough to fall in love with and to cherish—beautiful enough to quicken in his heart a longing for such discourse as tends towards the building of a noble nature. And from this he will be led to contemplate the beauty of laws and institutions. And when he discovers how nearly every kind of beauty is akin to every other he will conclude that the beauty of the body is not after all, of so great moment. . . . And thus, by scanning beauty's wide horizon, he will be saved from a slavish (*hosper oiketes*, ὡσπερ οἰκέτης) and illiberal devotion to the individual loveliness of a single boy, a single man.” (*Symposium* 210b8-d3; trans. Joyce)

Though the text does not explain how this occurs,³⁷ the initiate recognizes that the beauties of the soul are superior to those of the body.³⁸ This may indicate a movement

³⁶ “That all beauty is ‘akin’ is thought likely to strike anyone who makes comparisons; that it is ‘one and the same’ is a claim that perhaps only the Platonist would find it ‘very foolish’ to deny. But that is surely the point: This lover is marked out for philosophy, the preserve of the few (cf. 209e5-210a2), by the peculiarity in his reaction... The lover who comes to be more occupied by thoughts and expressions of beauty than by the beauty of the body that prompted them, being marked thereby as a reflective and cultured type, will naturally be open to the attractions of the soul.” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love”, p. 257)

³⁷ Santas (p. 42) asks “how Plato conceives of the change of attachment or emotion: is the original attachment to a single beautiful body transferred to the beauty of bodies, and later to the beauty of souls, and so on, or is the original desire extinguished and a new one takes its place”? He feels it unanswerable in the *Symposium* as the latter provides no clear evidence though the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* show *eros* to be a growing desire which ultimately encompasses all that is beautiful and good, the very essence of beauty and goodness.

³⁸ Ferrari in “Platonic Love” (pp. 255-7), discussing the *Symposium*, suggests that the ascent to the beautiful results from the act of abstraction from the particular/empirical, as does Singer (Vol. I. pp. 57-8). This contrasts with Cornford's reading in *Principium Sapientiae* that no abstracting from the phenomenal is possible as knowledge is achieved through *anamnesis* (pp. 51-53), so abstracting cannot account for goodness and virtue (pp. 48-49), opening the problematic of the one *versus* the many, bringing into

from physical beauty to inner beauty as virtue or goodness,³⁹ or to a “nobility”, not necessarily moral, of higher and greater value than that available to the body alone. Considering beauties of the soul as superior to beauties of the body, thus ascending from body to soul, Diotima moves progressively towards a higher and more “noble” and incidentally more impersonal type of beauty, such as custom, institution or knowledge, until the initiate reaches the revelation of the form of beauty, though it is subject to debate as to whether he gives up worldly attachments in the process.⁴⁰

In either case, Diotima views the permanent attachment to one particular body, soul, or institution as slavish. Transcending fixed relations with particulars saves the initiate from slavery. Dover (*Symposium*, p. 156) states of *ὡσπερ οἰκέτης* (*hosper oiketes*) that the

notion that it is ‘slavish’ to be content with the beauty of particulars resembles the argument of *Tht.* 172c-173b, where those trained in law and politics, contending always with a multitude of pressures, are contrasted as ‘slaves’ with free men, with philosophers who have time to think about abstract issues. D3 *σμικρολόγος* (*smikrologos*): in *Tht.* 175a *σμικρολόγια* (*smikrologia*) is the ‘pettiness’ of those who attach importance to what is, from a philosophical standpoint, trivial and transitory.

question again the *aporia* of how we know. Ficino provides a different reading: “the splendour of the celestial majesty shining through bodies” (*On Love*, Speech II:6), particular instances of beauty. Though extremely rich and passionate, this reading shows hints of the Neo-Platonic tradition as found in Plotinus (*Enneads* 1, 6,3) and Augustine (*Confessions*. X, 8-9), though not entirely succumbing to its full influence as does his commentator Allen in *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino*.

³⁹ The closeness of the terms is brought out by Dover’s use (p. 143; *Symposium* (204a5)) of *καλον καγαθον* as a “general laudatory term used predominantly, though not exclusively, of men; it differs from good in taking account not merely of moral disposition (as manifested in courage and generosity) but also attributes (e.g. wealth, good physique and skills) which enhance one’s value to the community.” Love of the higher mysteries demands, after examination, a conscious understanding that “beauty, whether of body or soul, is instrumental to their virtuous (that is, socially esteemed) conduct” (Ferrari, p. 255).

⁴⁰ There is some disagreement among commentators as to whether or not the lover of the forms definitively gives up all worldly attachments, particularly as *Symposium* 211d2-5 states, “And there in life... there if anywhere should a person live his life, beholding that beauty. If you once see that, it won’t occur to you to measure beauty by gold or clothing or beautiful boys and youths.”

Santas, with Vlastos and Moravcsik, believes that the lover of the form of Beauty has “given up, it seems all earthy attachments” (*Plato and Freud*, p. 69), a position which, with Nussbaum (*Fragility*, Ch. 7), Santas sees as corrected in the *Phaedrus*. According to Cobb (pp. 80-4), although Vlastos in “The Individual” pp. 33-35 and Moravcsik in “Reason and *Eros*” (p. 293) think the lower levels are “transcended in a final and permanent way, it seems more likely that the lower stages continue to be recognized as genuine, though limited, manifestations of beauty and hence to be appreciated for the beauty they contain....[Thus] reaching the highest levels does not mean one is unappreciative of the beauties focused on the lower levels.” This position is also supported by Santas (p. 42).

This is reminiscent of *Symposium* (173c5-d3; trans. Joyce) in which the financiers are described as “being very busy when they’re really doing absolutely nothing” and who are judged by Apollodorus to be themselves “the unfortunates.” This in turn points forward to Alcibiades’ comment that Socrates “makes him admit that while [he is] spending [his] time on politics, [he is] neglecting all the things that are crying for attention in [himself]” (216a5-6; trans. Joyce). However this figure is inverted when Alcibiades says Socrates, “[turns his] whole soul upside down and [leaves him] feeling as if [he] were the lowest of the low” (215e5-6; trans. Joyce) so that he “[dashes] off like a runaway slave” (216b7; trans. Joyce), implying that his political life represents his freedom/rebellion against the bondage of Socrates’ presence and *logoi*.

Yet is Alcibiades a slave to his worldly nature or to Socrates? Cobb notes that “Alcibiades confesses that, although he feels the enormous attraction of Socrates and believes that ‘whatever Socrates commands must be done’ (216e), he himself nevertheless turns away, a slave to the desire for popular fame (216b)” (Cobb p. 82). In this sense, Alcibiades is a slave to fame (the spirited part of the soul/*thumos*) “[pleasing] the crowd” (216b7)⁴¹ and to the appetite. Alcibiades knows that he ought to be governed by the intellect which accords with the justice of the soul, but he rebels against this sense of order and harmony succumbing to the temptations of both his spirited and appetitive parts, and is thereby enslaved by the desires of the lower parts of the soul. A. E. Taylor, anticipating Cobb’s position, discusses the tension between Alcibiades’ appropriateness to philosophy and his resistance due to uncontrolled earthly *eros* and pride, causing him to choose worldly victory.⁴² “We are made to look at the two types side by side, and listen to the confession of the triumphant worldling in the full flesh of triumph, that he has chosen the worse part.” (A. E. Taylor, p. 233) This suggests that though his actions suggest otherwise, Alcibiades still acknowledges Socrates to be his rightful master, and acknowledges himself to be Socrates’ “runaway slave”.

Through admitting that the way of philosophy is “true” Alcibiades acknowledges himself to be the slave of Socrates. Nussbaum thinks that this slavery is not due to his

⁴¹ See also *First Alcibiades* 124b5-6.

⁴² “Alcibiades, naturally endowed with all the gifts required for ‘philosophy,’ but a prey to lusts of the flesh and the eye and the pride of life, is the man who might have ‘seen’ if he would, the man who made the great refusal of sacrificing the reality for the shadow. He has chosen for the world and has all the world can give.” (A. E. Taylor, p. 233)

admiration purely of Socrates' *logoi*, but is an utter passion for the person of Socrates. Faced with Socrates, Alcibiades is "staggered", "bewitched" (215d5), "smitten with a kind of sacred rage" (215d9), "tears start into my eyes" (215e1-2). Socrates is compared to a "Siren" (216a7), and "Marsyas" (215e6). "I simply could not go on living in the way I did" (216a1; trans. Joyce), and further he is "the only man in the world that can make me feel ashamed" (216b3-4; trans. Joyce), giving Alcibiades "snakebites" in the heart and soul (217e6-218b5, 216b7).⁴³ As Alcibiades is enslaved by his infatuation with Socrates, he is "stuck" or "fixated" upon Socrates.⁴⁴

However in contrast with this view, at 216e6-217a1 Alcibiades describes a moment of seriousness when he had a "glimpse of the figures [Socrates] keeps within...godlike...bright and beautiful". As in line 217a6-7, Alcibiades expresses that what at the time he desired (and what he still seems to desire) is for Socrates to "teach [him] everything he [knows]"; this would indicate that the inner figures are Socrates' *logoi*. Alcibiades desires these so much that he would purchase them in exchange for his own body. For this reason terms like "bewitched", "smitten" and "staggered" apply not primarily to Socrates as an individual but to his philosophical *logoi* which he alone in the circle of Alcibiades produces. In this sense though the *logoi* are objective truths, Socrates is unique for Alcibiades. It must be added however that when others like Apollodorus

⁴³ Cf. Nussbaum's (*Fragility*, p. 197) account of Alcibiades enslaved by Socrates.

⁴⁴This fixation relates to that identified in perfectionist theory discussed by Stanley Cavell, in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, pp. 6-7). According to Cavell, the perfectionistic framework is that of a dialogue between a younger person or student and an older person who exemplifies traits of what the younger person wishes to become or embody, a framework existing in almost all Platonic dialogues. This desiring to become other than what one is represents a split of the self, a moment when the student finds himself alienated from his reality. In his attraction to this future self, represented by the teacher, the student "becomes enchained or fixated". This relation enables the student to change through education which takes the form of an ascent into a truer self.

This perfectionist view of the *Symposium* forcefully critiques Alcibiades because, through becoming fixated upon Socrates, he renders himself incapable of advancing towards the good; he does not perceive his relation with Socrates as an occasion for transformation as shown in *Symposium* 216a7-8 when Alcibiades says "He always traps me...and he makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time...so I refuse to listen to him; I stop up my ears and tear myself away from him". Because of this resistance, rather than understanding that Socrates' inner beauty is a reflection of the beautiful and pursuing that, Alcibiades feels extreme passion, reverence and fear towards Socrates, creating an idol of him while running from him which allows no transcendence.

Cavell (pp. 6-7) demonstrates this notion of perfectionism in the *Republic*, likewise Deb ("Socrates and Alcibiades: Plato's Perfectionism" pp. 4-15) argues for this relation in the *Symposium*, while Warner uses it in his analysis of the structure of the *Phaedrus* ("Appropriating the *Phaedrus*", pp. 7-10). However, unlike Cavell, the state of being stuck for Nussbaum has a particular beauty and provides a unique and essential kind of understanding which transcendent form-centred thought cannot penetrate (*Fragility*, p. 218 with regard to the *Phaedrus*).

recount Socrates' *logoi*, though his words consistently bewilder and stagger, the speakers themselves seem to have less appeal while Socrates and all details about him remain fascinating (thanks to the art of Plato) and objects of examination for Alcibiades, whether it be Socrates' conduct in war or at parties, how he dresses, where he goes, or whom he sits next to, indicating that Socrates as a person had much appeal and that Alcibiades does have strong feelings for him as an individual. Nonetheless, Alcibiades is "bitten" (218a5) and "smitten with a kind of sacred rage" (215d9; trans. Joyce) by the *logoi* of philosophy of which Socrates as *accoucheur* seeks to deliver Alcibiades and others, and this remains the main hold which Socrates has upon Alcibiades. Yet given that he prefers fame and the praise of men to Socrates' *logoi* which involve the pursuit of wisdom, he runs away from the man. Thus Nussbaum's analysis seems to be flawed. Alcibiades does not love Socrates strictly as an individual but is enslaved by the strife between two conflicting spheres, his fame and his love of the *logoi*, a position which remains dominated by self-interest.

Therefore we begin to see that Vlastos' and Nussbaum's critiques are problematic both with regard to Alcibiades and concerning Socrates. It seems that Alcibiades better exemplifies relatively selfish motives in that Alcibiades would exchange sex for Socrates' teachings and loves Socrates mainly for his *logoi*, not wholly but chiefly for what he possesses as opposed to for himself, which weakens Nussbaum's position that Alcibiades exemplifies passionate love of the individual in his relation to Socrates.

In contrast it seems that Socrates better exemplifies a workable notion of love of the individual. Though if taken in isolation Diotima's ladder of ascent may seem to make Vlastos' critique appear convincing, it becomes problematic when taken in context since Socrates does embody Diotima's *eros* directed towards the Beautiful yet spent his life seeking the well being of the souls of others, trying to beget virtue in them and trying to help them along the path of wisdom through his philosophical *logoi* in view of his own and their ethical perfection. This point is evident when Alcibiades says

"He always traps me, you see, and makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time, while all that matters is just what I most neglect; my personal shortcomings, which cry out for the closest attention." (216a4-7) Because of this, "when I see him, I feel deeply ashamed, because I'm doing nothing about my way of life, though I have already agreed with him that I should" (216b7-10).

Both here and in *First Alcibiades* (121a1-124b3), Socrates has clearly been concerned to help the decadent Alcibiades to change his life. Furthermore, having been physically pure with him, exemplifying *sophrosune*, Socrates has tried to guide him towards goodness and virtue, though he has failed as shown from the history of Athens as recounted at the beginning of this chapter. Like the philosopher king who must return to the cave after seeing the sun in order to help those still in darkness, so the goal of heavenly *eros* in the *Symposium* is, following the revelation of the beautiful, the procreating (*tiktein*) of true virtue (*arete*) in other individuals so that the initiate's goal is the perfection of their knowledge and understanding and hence the ethical perfection of others as well, so that both for initiate and others good may be their own "forever" (207a). For this reason Plato's view of love is not purely selfish or egocentric as Vlastos and Kosman suggest. Vlastos and Nussbaum have not appreciated that aspect of Plato's view of love demonstrated by Socrates' caring for the well-being of the souls of Alcibiades, and other individuals elsewhere, showing for Plato the individual not to be expendable as an object of love; this type of care Plato esteems worthy of being the major part of the "ideal" philosophical life. Nor is love of the individual incompatible with *sophrosune* as Nussbaum suggests, the two being synthesized and acted out by Socrates. Clearly the Plato of the *Symposium* does have some reservations concerning "Dionysian" *mania*, which Nussbaum notes. Overall, however, given this selfless serving element in Plato's representation of Socrates' effort to help Alcibiades, Socrates plays out effectively his role of *Eros* as *daimon*, intermediary between the divine and the mortals. Socrates does not fail to help Alcibiades due to any major inability to communicate on his part. The responsibility lies ultimately in Alcibiades' unwillingness to respond, his preference for fame and the approval of others which encourages his decadence and causes his demise.

Returning to the beginning of the chapter, we have seen through a comparison of the revelation of the beautiful with the entry of Alcibiades that Socrates is intermediary with regard to the opposition of the presentation of abstract reality *versus* symbolic representation. We have explored these images on three levels: through types of loves and love-objects, through the conflicting symbolic languages of the Dionysian versus the Apollonian, and through the conceptual with regard to love of the individual. Given

Diotima's definition of *eros* as intermediary and messenger between the mortal and divine (202e), and given the above view of Socrates as the personification of *eros*, Socrates acts as the messenger and intermediary. "Being in the middle of the two, [*eros*] rounds out the whole and binds fast, the all to all" (202e6-7; part of Socrates' response to Aristophanes' speech, 191d). This can be read to suggest that Socrates, the personification of *eros*, though unable to convert Alcibiades, structurally connects these two opposing focuses of love, through acting as intermediary and thus building a bridge between the extremes of the finite and the non-finite, through the structural and imagistic transition between Diotima's and Alcibiades' speeches. Thus Socrates, representing Platonic *eros*, embodies a choice to seek the beautiful beyond the particular which through the Beautiful returns to serve individuals and help them in turn ascend to the Beautiful in view of immortality, and thereby does not fall short of his role as intermediary between gods and men holding the world together.

Given that Socrates was unsuccessful at converting Alcibiades, it is left to be explored as to why Alcibiades moves from beloved to lover. This will become clearer in the light of the discussion of *Eros* and irony in the next chapter.

IV.

EROS AND IRONY

In the concluding section of our discussion of Socrates in the *Symposium*, we shall focus upon the interrelationship of Socratic *eros*, the child of *poros* and *penia*, and irony. Irony is “a way of speaking (or writing) which is meant to point to what is not spoken (written); it cannot be exercised without suggesting that something is held back....concealed by its author” (Griswold, “Irony”, p. 88). Thus far we have argued that Plato’s conception of *eros* in the *Symposium* is *eros* in pursuit of the Beautiful, exemplified by Diotima’s description of the ascent to the form of the Beautiful, which as we saw in the last chapter is exemplified by Socrates. Given, as we have also argued, that Socrates seeks to bring forth *arete* in youths, and hence the well-being of their souls, through dialectic, it is appropriate for him to employ irony since it forces youths to look beyond appearance and dig within themselves, thereby developing the ability to reflect. In order to understand how the concept of *eros* and irony interrelate in the *Symposium*, we shall then explore Alcibiades’ traditional use of irony concerning Socrates which will be seen as contrasting with Socratic irony which articulates a *penia*-dominant form of *eros*. Both these types of irony fall into a larger framework of Platonic irony which in turn displays a *poros*-dominant form of *eros* which seeks the well-being of the reader. This latter feature will serve as an introduction the second half our examination of Plato which will focus upon the *Phaedrus* and Plato’s employment of the recantation within it.

A. Traditional Irony

Following the eulogy in which he shows Socrates to be the personification of *eros*, Alcibiades ends his speech paradoxically with a warning to Agathon.

“Well, this is my praise of Socrates, though I haven’t spared him my reproach either; I told you how horribly he treated me—and not only me but also Charmides, Euthydemus, and many others. He deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you’re in love with him yourself! I warn you, Agathon, don’t let him fool you.” (222a7-222b5; Nehamas translation unless specified.)

According to Alcibiades, Socrates pursued him, behaving like a lover thereby causing Alcibiades to fall in love with him. Alcibiades counts this as deception because in reality Socrates is not his *erastes*, a point which becomes eventually apparent in *Symposium* 217a-219d.

Socrates is portrayed by Plato as a lover of physical beauty. The quality Alcibiades, Euthydemus, Charmides, and Agathon have in common is their physical beauty. Alcibiades is “captivating... a handsome man” (309a2-3), and “famous for his good looks” (Nehamas, p. 65). “Euthydemus [is] ... beautiful, as is clear from Xenophon *Memorabilia*. 1.2.29, 4.2.1” (Dover, *Symposium*, p. 176)¹. In *Charmides* 154a5, Critias describes Charmides, the son of Glaucon, as “the great beauty of the day”. Socrates is “astonished at his beauty and stature” (154c2), as if he had been a “statue” (154c7-8), also causing the “amazement and confusion” of the other boys (154c3). Also Agathon is described by Socrates as “a good-looking man” (174a8-9), confirmed by Alcibiades who accuses Socrates of “[figuring] out a way to find a place next to the most handsome man in the room!” (213c6-7) Alcibiades’ reproach of 222a7 is perhaps supported by the opening of the *Protagoras*, when Socrates is asked “where do you come from Socrates? No doubt from the pursuit of the captivating Alcibiades?” (309a1-2) Given that in the *Symposium* Agathon seems more the centre of Socrates’ concern than himself, even after his arrival, Alcibiades’ reference to the fake seduction of himself, Charmides, Euthydemus, and his warning to Agathon suggests that Socrates tends at least initially to focus his attentions on the “great beauties”, whom he actively pursues, thereby causing confusion.

However Alcibiades is deceived in that it is not his physical body which Socrates desires but the well-being of his soul. Returning to the ladder of Diotima’s ascent through *eros* to the Beautiful, the type of *eros* which according to the last chapter is personified by Socrates, we see the first rung to be concerned with love of the beautiful body 210a7-10. Barker (2002) points out that this concern with handsome youths represents the norm both culturally and also in so far as a Platonic thinker is “attracted to beauty wherever he finds it”. However, as Barker also notes, Socrates like the initiate does not remain fixated

¹ “The sophist after whom the dialogue Euthydemus is named is another person”. (Dover, *Symposium*, p. 176).

upon love of the individual body but quickly moves up to love of the soul (*Symposium* 210b7-c3). The beauty of the soul “quickens in his heart the longing for such discourse as tends towards the building of a noble nature”, hence demonstrating in this ascent, *contra* Nussbaum, the lover’s concern for the well-being of the beloved’s soul. This is demonstrated in *Charmides* 154d-e in which Socrates rather than desiring to see the beautiful body of Charmides states, “before we see his body, should we not ask him to strip and show us his soul?” indicating that Socrates sees the beauty of the soul as superior to that of the body echoing *Symposium* 210b7-8. This point is reinforced in *Republic* 402d1-e1 in the discussion of education, where Socrates further maintains that love of the body must allow no physical contact other than what is appropriate between father and son (403b4-c1), and must be directed towards “honourable ends” being “a sober and harmonious love of the orderly and the beautiful” (403a4-5). While Socrates demonstrates his physically pure intentions in *Symposium* 217a-219d, in *Alcibiades I* he goes to great lengths to humble Alcibiades through showing his insignificance when faced with the greatness of the kings of Sparta and Persia. Rather than depending upon “beauty, and stature, and birth, and mental endowments” (*Alcibiades I*, 123e4-5) Socrates points him towards the acquisition of virtue and tells him he must “rely...upon his training and wisdom—these are the things which Hellenes value” (*Alcibiades I*, 123d3-5). Thus as we saw in the last chapter, while initially being attracted by physical beauty, Socrates moves beyond it quickly to his real interest which is the well-being of Alcibiades’ soul.

Nonetheless through this interaction, as we saw in the last chapter, Alcibiades and others though initially conceiving of themselves as the beloved fall in love with Socrates. “Before you know it you are in love with him yourself!” (*Symposium* 222b4-5) Alcibiades recognizes a deep beauty and virtue within Socrates, his *logoi*. “But I once caught a glimpse of him when he was open like Silenus’ statues, and I had a glimpse of the figures he keeps hidden within: they are so godlike—so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing—that I no longer had a choice—I just had to do whatever he told me” (216e6-217a3). Alcibiades believes he has seen some unique good, a truer deeper inner virtue within Socrates, which perhaps only he has been privileged to witness (as suggested by Joyce’s translation). Specifically because of these *logoi*, Alcibiades is

inextricably bound to Socrates who generates them. Lines 222c2-4 read: “Alcibiades’ frankness [provoked] a lot of laughter, especially since it [was] obvious that he [was] still in love with Socrates”. This suggests that Alcibiades had strong feelings for Socrates as an individual and as bearer of the *logoi*, also suggested by his absorption in Socrates’ every movement, showing that the beloved has become the lover, though as we discussed in the last chapter his feelings for Socrates remain self-focused and selfish.

However, we must also note that though Alcibiades extensively praises Socrates for his self-control (*sophrosune*) and rational ability he, feeling deceived, also accuses him of playing his little “game of irony”.² When Alcibiades states “In public, I tell you, his whole life is one big game—a game of irony” (216e4-5), he means, silenus-like³, Socrates acts *as if* “he’s crazy about beautiful boys; he constantly follows them around in a perpetual daze” (216d3-4), however in actuality, “You can’t imagine how little he cares whether a person is beautiful, or rich or famous in any other way that most people admire. He considers all these possessions beneath contempt” (216d10-216e3), rejecting their advances, indicating that beautiful physical bodies and the physical are not what he desires to possess in the first place. It seems reasonable that as the first level of the ascent to Beauty is the beauty of the body that this recognition of beauty in the youth articulates that first step and acts as a starting-point from which, as in *Charmides* 156d-159a, Socrates can lead the youth from his preoccupation with the body to that of the soul. However regardless of whether or not Socrates intends to deceive, his actions and words are misunderstood and therefore function ironically. Analyzed by Griswold as one of six forms of irony found in the Platonic dialogues, not only does this indicate a “divergence between Socrates’ public words (to the effect that he loves beautiful youths or deeds) and

² Though with Barker (2002) I agree that Alcibiades’ speech in the *Symposium* is focused upon the praise of Socrates’ “*sophrosune* and mental ability”, Alcibiades while clearly annoyed that his plan of seduction has failed is also disturbed by Socrates’ rejection of his physical advances because his body represents what he most values about himself which would suggest that at least initially he may have taken it personally. In contrast Barker feels the strong language used by Alcibiades in *Symposium* 219c is undercut by his addressing the others present at the Banquet as jurors in a court of law. However as Barker rightly points out Socrates is not rejecting Alcibiades as an individual, given that Socrates conceives of the body as having less value than the soul as is apparent above. With Alcibiades’ plan foiled and his priorities deflated he is himself humbled, and perhaps his pride hurt, which causes him to idealize Socrates.

³ Alcibiades’ use of the image of the Silenus statue is of consequence precisely because it does not appear to be what it is. Likewise Socrates outside appears to be attracted to the youths physically, but inside he is indifferent to their physical beauty and is concerned with virtue. For this reason, Alcibiades says that Socrates fooled everyone, and in this duplicity he accuses Socrates of playing his game of irony.

his private ones, [but]...what ever Socrates may say about his erotic interests, he ultimately does not follow through in practice....‘deeds speak louder than words’...The public words and deeds, rather than the private ones, are ironic” (Griswold, “Irony”, p. 90); in this way for Alcibiades, the person Socrates appears to be conflicts with and veils the person he actually is and his actual priorities. The discovery that Socrates is more interested in the beauty of souls than bodies acts as the unveiling of truth, a traditional understanding of irony, which Kierkegaard in the *Concept of Irony* classifies as his first type of irony, a separation of essence from existence which allows for the progressive unveiling of essence.⁴

B. Socratic Irony

Putting aside this initial traditional type of irony, Socrates’ overall use of irony (though as with all true ironists we can never know what Socrates really thought⁵) can be seen as its inversion. Rather than an appearance of ignorance dissolving through the revelation of the essence of the truth, as in the case with Alcibiades’ traditional understanding of irony above, in Socrates’ strategy of irony by stating that he knows nothing and thus presupposing personal ignorance, he seems to substitute ignorance or emptiness for essence, while replacing false belief/the belief of wisdom for appearance. As essence in this latter form of irony is ignorance, the ironic method of Socrates is to reveal this ignorance or emptiness through his rational ability in order to open the way towards wisdom and truth.⁶ So Socrates’ mission is through reason to check the validity of all claims of wisdom or truth whether concerning convention, tradition, or personal

⁴ On this first level Kierkegaard suggests that irony can be seen as exemplified by Socrates’ physical appearance, which is ironic in that essence does not inform “nor fully negate” appearance. “The phenomenon exists not to disclose the essence but to conceal it. If one bears in mind that in happy Greece essence and phenomenon were united as an immediate, natural qualification, then one also perceives that as this harmony is broken, the separation must be cut so deep that a unity in a higher form is brought about. In this case, it might be possible that Socrates interpreted this contradiction between his essence and his appearance ironically. He considered it entirely appropriate that his exterior suggested something quite different from his interior... But if we rather bear in mind the ironic delight Socrates took in being so equipped by nature that everyone inevitably was mistaken about him, there will be no need to go any deeper into physiognomic profundities.” (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, p. 212; henceforth called *Concept*)

⁵ Nor shall we try as this is not the historical Socrates but Plato’s “fictional” Socrates. (Griswold, “Irony”, p. 85)

⁶ Kierkegaard, *Concept*, p. 211.

conviction and thereby reveal the “genuine” ignorance underlying all false beliefs of the *sophoi*, thereby opening the way towards truth.

In Kierkegaard’s strong reading irony is defined as emptiness as opposed to speculative fullness.⁷ The speculative method presupposes that the essence is a fullness or plenitude and therefore seeks after that fullness through progressively deeper questioning which in turn reveals “deeper and more significant...answer[s]”, a method which Kierkegaard ascribes to Plato. The *Socratic* ironic method presupposes that there is no answer, an emptiness, and seeks to suck out all possible content through questioning in order to reveal that emptiness, negative or void. For this reason, Kierkegaard sees Socrates’ questioning as ironic, as he claims he knows nothing, and believes others know nothing, and through his questioning (which in itself indicates a resource) revealed both to himself and to them that both they and he were ignorant, knew nothing.⁸ According to this line of thought as Socrates begins with the presupposition that he, like all men, knows nothing, he ends with the conclusion that he individually and men communally know nothing.⁹

In retrospect the recognition of a personal lack of knowledge by Socrates and a demonstration of the like in others indicates the presence of *penia*, a poverty or lack. Thus Socrates in trying to demonstrate his own and man’s ignorance aims at demonstrating man’s poverty and lack. We saw that this poverty is traced in the

⁷ “The intention in asking questions can be twofold. That is, one can ask with the intention of receiving an answer containing the desired fullness, and hence the more one asks, the deeper and more significant becomes the answer; or one can ask without any interest in the answer except to suck out the apparent content by means of the question and thereby leave an emptiness behind. The first method presupposes, of course, that there is a plenitude; the second that there is an emptiness. The first is the speculative method; the second the ironic. Socrates in particular practiced the latter method.” (*Concept*, p. 36)

⁸ So both for himself and to others, “Socrates’ questioning was essentially aimed at the knowing subject for the purpose of showing that when all was said and done they knew nothing whatever. Every philosophy that begins with a presupposition naturally ends with the same presupposition, and just as Socrates’ philosophy began with the presupposition that he knew nothing, so it ended with the presupposition that human beings know nothing at all” (*Concept*. pp. 37, 40). With regard to his “divine mission” see *Apology* 23b-c, 30a, 33c; and *Concept*. pp. 38, 175; “Socrates’ irony was not turned against only the Sophists; it was turned against the whole established order.” (*Concept*. pp. 213-4) Thus Socrates was justly accused to be in conflict with the state religion, being in “entirely polemic relation to the Greek state religion to substitute something completely abstract for the concrete individuality of the gods” (*Concept*. p. 160), and show the Greek state that their conception of the gods was finite and therefore transitory, which was to undermine and discredit them.

⁹ It is not always so clear as Kierkegaard suggests that Socrates begins with a belief in the *telos* of ignorance. Socrates begins with a recognition of his personal ignorance and ends with the conclusion that man knows nothing.

Symposium through *eros* as a longing for that which one lacks and which is therefore negative (200e3-6).¹⁰ For Kierkegaard, “this is the substance of love. The desire and the longing are the negative in love, that is, the immanent negativity... This definition is also the most abstract itself, not in the ontological sense but in the sense of what lacks content” (*Concept*. p. 45-6), as does knowledge for Kierkegaard.¹¹ Thus acknowledgement of ignorance, lack of possession, or poverty within himself and others is the beginning of, motivation behind and an integral part of the essence of both *eros* and philosophy. Therefore rightly viewed Socrates’ use of ignorance as associated with essence is entirely consistent with his understanding of *eros* and philosophy, as both involve a negative element.

We saw poverty or need personified as *Penia* in the myth of *Eros* (203c1-2), the mother of *Eros*, so that *Eros* has a negative element: *Eros* is an intermediate being, is neither rich nor poor (203c7-d8). For Kierkegaard, “this negative element... is the eternal restlessness of thinking, continually dividing and combining, this negative element that thought can not hold on to since it is the propelling element in thought” (*Concept*. p. 106), which articulates *Eros*’ philosophical nature (204b2-9) and the correlation of *eros* and philosophy (177d8-e1). *Eros* is neither poverty nor resource, wise nor ignorant, but between the two and therefore is partially negative. Similarly, *Eros* is related to irony, as irony involves the tension of essence and existence likewise seen as resource and need, and therefore involved in the dynamics of unveiling and/or undermining. “The ironist lifts the individual up and out of immediate existence. This is his liberating function, but thereafter he lets him float [as if]... between two magnets—one attracting and the other repelling” (*Concept*. p. 48), an account which relates the ironist to the inciter of *eros* or seducer, showing the interconnection and perhaps identification of the ironist and

¹⁰ Kierkegaard, *Concept*. pp. 45-6.

¹¹ “But neither is the case with Socrates. He does not call the relationship [of love] back to the categories. His abstract is a totally empty designation. He starts with the concrete and arrives at the most abstract and there, where the investigation should begin, he stops. The conclusion he comes to is actually the indefinable qualification of pure being: love is—because the addendum, that it is longing, desire, is no definition, since it is merely a relation to a something that is not given. In the same way, one could also take knowledge back to a totally negative concept by defining it as appropriation, acquisition, because this, after all, is manifestly the sole relation of knowledge to the known, but beyond that it is also possession.” (Kierkegaard, *Concept*. p. 46)

seducer,¹² through the intermediacy of both *eros* and irony, in that each by definition stands between emptiness and fullness and is aporetic due to their *penia*.

However taken overall, given this interconnection between *eros*, philosophy and irony, Kierkegaard's view seems inaccurate. Regardless of his recognition of personal ignorance, Socrates possesses the ability to reason, and therefore, as we discussed in Chapter II, he is not devoid of knowledge and *poros* (a way through). As Griswold ("Irony", p. 89) writes, though "Socrates professes ignorance...it is false that he is simplistically ignorant, but perhaps true that in some deeper sense he is indeed ignorant—and in a way that shows a certain kind of knowledge". In examining what he defines as the first form of Socratic irony Griswold discusses how "Socrates' public deeds and words [within a given dialogue]...contradict his humble claim to ignorance and his (ostensible) desire to be instructed". Furthermore he examines the tension between Socrates'

aporia about issues fundamental to the polis....and his equally public and quite arrogant claim that he represents the god....in the *Apology* as the messenger of god sent to benefit the citizens of Athens,...[implying that he] knows well the truth about virtue [etc. This creates the]...suspicion that he is dissimulating about his ignorance...[While] not wise, he has learned a great deal along the way, as manifested by the ability to put the right questions and conduct the conversation. (Griswold, "Irony", pp. 89-90)

One could even that say through maintaining his claim to ignorance, lack of wisdom, Socrates actually accentuates and emphasizes the understanding and rational ability he does possess, which is ironic.¹³ In this way Socrates leads youths along the path towards philosophical truth. This path, Barker notes, is always incomplete and the knowledge or understanding gained, which as content represents plenitude, is "partial and provisional" because as philosophers are lovers of wisdom they always are in lack. Nonetheless through the ventures on this path articulated in the dialogues, both participants and readers gain understanding given that they more fully understand what they lack and how

¹² See Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*.

¹³ In a manner closely related to Griswold's sixth kind of Socratic irony: "Silent about a definition or concept which would significantly contribute to the success of the dialogue. The result is not that the argument is invalid but that it is incomplete." (Griswold, "Irony", p. 92)

they “might approach it more closely” (Barker, 2002), hence gaining the means by which their lack might be satisfied.

Seen from a more critical perspective, Kierkegaard unfairly portrays Socrates in an underlying negative manner as an ironist seeking to reduce others to an *aporia*, making it difficult to understand why “almost every one of Socrates’ associates” “inevitably” became the lover of Socrates (*Concept.*, p. 48). Kierkegaard ascribes this phenomenon to Socrates’ irony as “it is the nature of irony never to unmask itself and also to be a Protean change of masks” which is elusive, “extraordinarily seductive and fascinating...[holding] one prisoner in inextricable bonds” (*Concept.*, pp. 48-9). Through not giving explicit answers with regard to philosophy and his personal life, and using temporal delay to create a sense of expectancy, Kierkegaard believes Socrates maintained an ambiguity which caused Alcibiades to become enthralled by him.¹⁴ However as we have seen Alcibiades loved Socrates less for his manipulation than for his *logoi*, though a certain elusiveness may have added to the appeal.

Alcibiades did experience an initial liberation and broadening (*Concept.*, p. 49) as a result of Socrates’ calling into question Alcibiades’ past beliefs and deflating them (p. 191) leaving him with an emptiness, an *aporia*,¹⁵ which initially is experienced as freedom (217a1-7). However according to Kierkegaard’s reading, Socrates did not respond to this emptiness which he had caused with “a rich exchange of ideas, or a copious outpouring on one side and a grateful receiving on the other” (*Concept.*, p. 48) as

¹⁴ Among his pupils, “Alcibiades must be an exemplar *instar omnium* [worth them all]. This reckless, sensate, ambitious, talented young person must naturally have been a highly flammable material for Socrates’ ironic sparks” (*Concept.* p. 189). Rather than giving abundantly to Alcibiades which would have been “a rich exchange,” producing an idea which would have joined them, Socrates seemed to present himself as lover but then never gave, never opened up and poured himself out into the beloved, never “unmasked himself” fully. In response to Alcibiades’ attempted seduction Socrates said “You are right about that,...In the future, let’s consider these things together. We’ll always do what seems the best to the two of us” (219b1-3). This ambiguous response made Alcibiades think Socrates was “smitten with [his] arrows” (219b5) but to his amazement “lay there all night with this god-like and extraordinary man....[and] when [he] got up next morning [he] had no more slept with Socrates, within the meaning of the act, than if he’d been [his] father or an elder brother” (Joyce, 219d1-2). As a technique of both seduction and irony, temporal delay created the hope of future fulfillment, which perpetuated his desire into the future. For this reason his presence remained ambiguous and undefined, Protean-like. This ambiguity, responding to Agathon’s speech in which *Eros* has a lightness of foot (195d3-196a1) and the duplicity inherent in mischievousness (Nehamas translates *ate* as mischief. See *Iliad* XIX, 92-3), generated in Alcibiades much passion and agitation due to Alcibiades’ desire to possess and define Socrates, to limit him, which significantly corresponds to the Platonic definition of good as limitation. In this understanding, precisely because Socrates eluded Alcibiades’ conception of the lover, Alcibiades became enthralled by him.

¹⁵ See *Meno* 80c6-e6; also *Concept.* pp. 175-6.

he had none (177d8-e1; 216d4-5), but left Alcibiades in emptiness resulting in the transferring of his neediness from ideas which had filled his void to Socrates who had torn down these illusions (219d7-e5), explaining why Alcibiades' eulogy is not dedicated to *Eros* but to Socrates (214d2-e). Socrates had, as Kierkegaard puts it, made "the idea...personal property" (*Concept*. p. 49).¹⁶ Against this it needs to be pointed out that this claim that Socrates refused to interact is false in that Socrates did exchange ideas with Alcibiades, both in *Alcibiades I* and in the *Symposium*. Alcibiades' idealization of Socrates, as we saw in the last chapter, resulted from the high value he placed on Socrates as the generator of philosophical *logoi* in conflict with his own emotional rejection of this path when faced with the temptations of his lower nature; it is this which may be said to cause a conflation between Socrates and his *logoi* whereby the idea seems to become the personal property of Socrates.

On Kierkegaard's reading, this transference of neediness onto Socrates rendered Alcibiades unable to extricate himself from Socrates, reducing Alcibiades to an *aporia* as to how to win over Socrates.¹⁷ This *aporia* proved a state of growing intensity, insecurity and discomfort for Alcibiades, like a "wasting disease" (*Concept*., p. 48-9)¹⁸ In this way

¹⁶ In so doing, while Socrates claimed that he was ignorant, Alcibiades thought that he possessed the truth (217a1-3; 221d3-7). With regard to Socrates' arguments Alcibiades says, "They're truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue inside. They're of great—no, of the greatest—importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man" (222a4-6). Alcibiades' state was intensified through Socrates' continued teasing, maintaining the ambiguity through "[giving] with one hand and [taking] away with the other" (213c-214e), a tendency which suggests to Alcibiades that Socrates *may* become his lover (219b1-3), which for Alcibiades simultaneously signified access to the beautiful and good, ie, the truth (218d2-4; also 221d3-7).

¹⁷ Though humiliated he was in a state of admiration. "Here was a man whose strength and wisdom went beyond my wildest dreams! How could I bring myself to hate him? I couldn't bear to lose his friendship. But how could I possibly win him over? ...The only trap by means of which I had thought I might capture him had already proved a dismal failure. I had no idea what to do, no purpose in life; ah, no one else has ever known the real meaning of slavery" (219d5-e6). Alcibiades too resembles *Eros* in his desire for Socrates. Alcibiades in his pursuit of the good and the beautiful (203d4-7) embodied in Socrates has exhausted his resources to win over Socrates (203d3-4). However like "Love [which is] never completely without resource, nor is he ever rich" (203e5-6), and therefore is aporetic, Alcibiades wants Socrates yet cannot win him over, desires to possess yet lacks possession. As such he is "without way", in an *aporia*. This lack of way reduces him to purposelessness that makes him feel limited and trapped in a negative sense (thus suggesting an opposing meaning of 'limitation' which typically is seen by Plato as positive).

¹⁸ In this state of *aporia*, the relation of Alcibiades and Socrates is "held at the abstract, vacillating initiation of a relation, was held at the zero point and never increased in strength and inwardness, so that while the intensity increased on both sides, this intensity nevertheless was so exactly balanced that the relation remained the same and Alcibiades' growing vehemence continually found its master in Socrates' irony" (*Concept*. p. 189). This heightening of intensity surfaces in the irony and sarcasm of the interaction of Alcibiades and Socrates (213c-214e). With growing intensity the *aporia* is maintained, perpetuating and increasing Alcibiades' state of torture, whereby Alcibiades' inner *aporiai* or emptiness of Socrates became

Kierkegaard charges Socrates, the ironist, with sucking all the life out of his lovers, and manipulating Alcibiades while he thinks he is being soothed and comforted¹⁹ through the prolongation of this intensely provoking flirtation.²⁰ On this reading Socrates distances himself from others, deflating their false beliefs then withdrawing²¹ thus limiting his interactions with others thereby enabling himself to remain in control and be self-sufficient.²² Though “as an *accoucheur*, he was unrivalled” for Kierkegaard, given Socrates’ distance and self-sufficiency he did not seem to be truly involved with or have any selfless concern for his students,²³ which suggests to some extent a selfish utilitarian love, the interpretation of Platonic *eros* heavily criticized by Vlastos.²⁴

the “wasting disease” (*Concept* pp. 48-9). Thereby Alcibiades is happiest yet most tortured when he is closest to Socrates (*ibid.*) who in turn is aporetic, the personification of *Eros* (Osborne, p. 101), therefore partially embodying negativity and lack (203c7-d4).

¹⁹ “In this manner there quietly develops in the individual the disease that is just as ironic as any other wasting disease and allows the individual to feel best when he is closest to disintegration. The ironist is the vampire who has sucked the blood of the lover and while doing so has fanned him cool, lulled him to sleep, and tormented him with troubled dreams. (*Concept*, pp. 48-9)

²⁰ *Concept*, p. 188; See *The Seducer’s Diary* for an elaboration of Kierkegaard’s view of the interrelationship or identification of the ironist and the seducer, a position clearly branching from this section of his Thesis. Further note the role of *The Seducer’s Diary* as an act of deception to alleviate the pain caused by his breaking his engagement to Regine Olsen. Also see Hong and Hong introduction and notes to *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*.

²¹ Considering that Socrates not only reduced others to ignorance but maintained personal ignorance which identifies him with the many, Socrates must necessarily distinguish himself or impose a distance in order to win the devotion of his pupils. This distancing was possible practically because Socrates accepted and was satisfied with his state of ignorance, embracing instead “the eternal unrest” while others fought it. This resulted in his emotional “distance” or ambiguity whereby Socrates necessarily separated himself from Alcibiades (*Concept*, p. 178) (as contrasted with the vision of the *Phaedrus* where one knows oneself through the other). Viewing it as his mission (as emissary of Apollo) while fulfilling his aporetic role, “he placed individuals under his dialectical vacuum pump, pumped away the atmospheric air they were accustomed to breathing, and left them standing there. For them, everything was now lost, except to the extent that they were able to breathe ethereal air. Socrates, however, had nothing more to do with them but hastened on to new ventures” (*ibid.*). This process, the deflation of the beliefs of others by which he forced them to recognize their ignorance, meant that Socrates separated himself and withdrew from everyone.

²² He limited himself to a single sort of relationship, midwifery (see *Concept* p. 192 “having emancipated himself from every other real relation, had concentrated on one,” midwifery), which was maintained at a relatively superficial level and over which he exercised complete control as if to render himself self-sufficient (*Concept*, p. 182).

²³ This for Kierkegaard is demonstrated in the fact that he did not “assume any real responsibility for the later lives of his students, and here again Alcibiades provides us with an example” (*Concept*, p. 191). Alcibiades’ subsequent demise appeared to support the accusations in the *Apology* 33a-b that Socrates corrupted the youth of Athens, a position discussed in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* I. ii. 12-16 and commented upon in *Republic* VI 494b (see Nehamas p. 65). Many have suggested that the writing of the *Symposium* was Plato’s effort to vindicate Socrates from accusations of corrupting and therefore being responsible for the demise of Alcibiades. (Also see Bury)

²⁴ “The Individual as an Object of Love”, pp. 8, 19, 26; Santas, p. 42; Kosman, p. 54.

Though an ambiguity is present within the text facilitating the development of this view of Socrates and Platonic *eros*, the ascription of purely selfish love to Socrates has been criticized at the beginning of this chapter and in the last, though shown to be true of the “unproductively narcissistic” Alcibiades (Sayres, pp. 126-7). While Greek virtue-based ethics does involve the central quest of self-perfection, Socrates is far from being completely selfish.²⁵ Seeking to subvert Plato’s idealization of Socrates as ideal philosopher and lover,²⁶ Kierkegaard does not seem to take full account of the importance Socrates attributes to people (hence his high valuation of Athens, a place where he could freely communicate, Osborne p. 88; also *Phaedrus* 230d4-6) resulting in the devotion of his whole life to the service of trying to benefit their souls (*Apology* 36c), and pursuing virtue himself in accordance with his representation as the personification of *Eros*. This ambiguity seems therefore to point to a slight ironic aloofness on the part of Socrates, not intending to hinder or injure as Kierkegaard suggests, but to create a *caesura* by which Socrates forced those he sought to aid not to be dependent but to think for themselves and call on their own inner resources. Meanwhile Socrates stayed close at hand moving them forward with endless well-situated and leading questions.

Furthermore, as we demonstrated in the last chapter, Alcibiades is ultimately responsible for his obsession and subsequent demise. It is evident from *Symposium* 216e6-217a3 that Alcibiades, though perhaps not understanding fully, deeply appreciated Socrates’ *logoi*,²⁷ grasping the implications involved and the crucial need to apply them to his life (216a3-216c1). However he veered away emotionally from this intellectual desire giving way to the dominance of appetitive desires and the *thumos*²⁸ resulting in strife within his soul evident in *Symposium* 216c1-4. There is an echo here of Thrasymachus in *Republic* I and, perhaps more clearly of Calicles in the *Gorgias*²⁹; this

²⁵ Barker, Personal Communications, 2003.

²⁶ See Griswold, “Irony”, p. 85; this is exemplified when Kierkegaard describes this questioning and deflation of others as an “annihilating enthusiasm of negativity” (*Concept*, p. 175). Kierkegaard’s reading subverts the idealization of Socrates much further than Sayre who simply seeks to show how Socrates’ appearance and conduct indicate that he has not seen *auto to kalon* and therefore is not a teacher of philosophy but the personification of *Eros*.

²⁷ Cf. Griswold, “Irony”, pp. 93-4.

²⁸ See the tripartite soul in *Republic* IV, IX and *Phaedrus* 253c-254e.

²⁹ In the *Gorgias* 481c-482c, Socrates argues that both he and Calicles are in love with two objects; Socrates with Alcibiades and philosophy, and Calicles with the Athenian demos and Demos, son of Pylampes. Ruled by his beloveds, Calicles constantly changes his opinion influenced by Demos’ point of

phenomenon Barker (2002) suggests has a bearing on why Socrates sees “pre-rational training towards virtue” (*Republic* book 2-3) as crucial as well as the prescription of “virtuous” poetry (*Republic* 395b-c) and the exclusion of the wrong type of poet (*Republic* 398a). Clearly “no matter how much (ethical) content Socratic argument carries, its ‘rational’ strategies cannot by themselves persuade or coerce the non-rational appetites and emotions”.

Furthermore, Plato’s strong attachment to individuals as objects of love is clear through the presence of Socrates within his dialogues, particularly those of the early and middle period. Plato mobilizes the entire structure of seduction which is the dialectical structure of the texts around Socrates and makes the figure of Socrates himself serve his ends, identifying Socrates with *Eros* in the *Symposium*. Though in a certain sense this figure is a literary construct serving a structural purpose, through his centrality and consistent presence Plato shows his “awe” for and fixation upon Socrates, feeling greatly in debt to him.³⁰ Socrates, portrayed as midwife by which true ideas are brought forth in the dialogues, seems to act as *accoucheur* for Plato enabling him to bring forth his own inner richness, beauty and goodness which manifests itself through the creation of his dialogues which in turn seek the well-being of the soul of the reader, desiring to beget in beauty. In this way the texts act as intermediaries like *eros* between Socrates, Plato and the reader.

Nonetheless, though misreading the intentions and heart of Plato’s Socrates, Kierkegaard correctly notes that Socrates uses irony to clear away the weeds of “false belief” and truth claims³¹ in order that new seeds or “principles already present as possibility” (*Concept*, p. 214) may take root. Socrates in this way is acting as a midwife for the true idea (*Theaetetus* 150c4). As Socrates’ ironic deflation³² opened the way for further thought and reflection so clearly this exposure of ignorance laid the ground for the

view and likewise adjusts his position to accord with that of the Athenian demos, seeking praise of men, thus resembling Alcibiades. In contrast Socrates allows himself only to be led and possessed by philosophy which is far more stable, and holds to the same argument or position regardless of whether what he says displeases people, Alcibiades included. Philosophy as his master enables Socrates to know and remain in harmony with himself.

³⁰ *Concept*. pp. 31, 188-9.

³¹ His “irony, in turn, is the glaive, the two-edged sword that he swung like an avenging angel over Greece.” (*Concept*. p. 211)

³² Cf. *Concept*. p. 214.

possibility of the pursuit of true virtue and understanding, thereby enabling the *aporia* to become a *poros* or pathway.

C. Introducing Platonic Irony

It appears, then, that though for Kierkegaard Socratic irony presupposed emptiness and ended with emptiness, in actuality Socrates presupposed ignorance while having as his resource the faculty of reason and this faculty moved him forward beyond the *aporia* on the path of reason, so that though still not possessing wisdom he understood better what he lacked and how it could be achieved. Though Socrates claims he knows nothing and Kierkegaard believes he begins in ignorance and moves towards it (reducing others to ignorance on the way), Barker (2002) rightly claims “Plato’s Socrates, even at his most ‘aporetic’, always has something more than mere ignorance to offer [:] a firm conviction of the value of *arete*, or the existence of a strong nexus between *arete* and knowledge; an assurance that reasoning can test the credentials of beliefs, and that we owe it to ourselves to examine our lives”, among others. Though Socrates ironically remains slightly aloof and reduces others to ignorance, in fact he does not leave them in a state of emptiness in that through calling into question their beliefs, reducing them to *aporiai*, he teaches them how to reflect for themselves, rather than “reeling off a list of ‘truths’ for Alcibiades to memorize” (Barker, 2002). This reduction to ignorance is an essential, indeed a recurring, feature in the path towards wisdom in that one must constantly recognize one’s imperfection and lack in order to be motivated to take a step further to fill the lack and to seek betterment of the soul. Kierkegaard’s suggestion that we are “ironically teased” is misleading since we are left “far from ‘empty’...in that we have acquired a massive battery of conceptual and argumentative resources, and a profound sense of direction” (Barker, 2002), and therefore rather than emptying us, through deflating false belief the dialogues leave us fuller than we began though never completely so, hence showing us to have advanced another step along the path of understanding.

Kierkegaard’s reading of Socratic irony in terms of emptiness is then, although suggestive, so exaggerated as to be misleading. His contrasting concept of speculative

fullness, though also an exaggeration in the context of the Platonic dialogues, is perhaps more illuminating. To claim Plato presupposed and had the *telos* of fullness, though extreme, points to something important in the overall experience of the dialogues in that each element is meaningful³³ and directed towards the inducement of the reader to reflective philosophical thought with the goal of the well-being of their souls through procreating true virtue. The presupposition is that virtue and understanding are possible and the path towards an unachievable goal of perfect understanding is the gradual resolution of problems along the way, which though opening new problems and exposing new *aporiai*, does move the philosopher forward along the path of understanding, while simultaneously increasing in virtue. As this understanding of *eros* presupposes and is directed towards fullness, it can be conceived of as a *poros*-dominant tendency in *eros* emphasizing that part of *eros* focused not upon lack but on a pathway through lack, which is Plato's overall project.

Platonic irony is the means by which Plato (understood as the implied author of the dialogues) introduces and leads the reader along this pathway. As "Plato is absent from his texts" (Griswold, "Irony", p. 84), neither represented through Socrates or another character, nor attached to a specific point of view (*ibid.*, p. 88), this leaves him free to sculpt the dialogue as a whole in order to communicate an overall message to the reader. Unlike Socratic irony which involves "'living' conversation", Plato's irony which encompasses it is "as much a way of revealing as it is of concealing, a way of teaching and motivating the reader / auditor to look further" (*ibid.*, p. 88, also see p. 92). Platonic irony, which Griswold ("Irony", p. 87) characterizes as "dramatic irony", focuses upon speeches and actions as distinct from characters, whereby "the author [communicates]" with the reader. Resembling the Greek notion of Fate³⁴ or destiny, all elements within the dialogue whether dramatic elements, arguments, speeches, silences, and also I would argue characters, are meaningful coming together for a central purpose of communicating a central message (*ibid.*, p. 88), which I agree with Griswold ("Irony", p. 100) to be that of "educating his readers into leading reflective, possibly philosophical lives", and which

³³ Written dialogues, it may be argued, are more perfect than real conversation as everything within them is meaningful and nothing is by chance, indicative of "logographic necessity" (*Phaedrus* 264b7).

³⁴ "A design of which [the characters] are ignorant (personified in Greek tragedies by god and fate) guides their conversation" (Griswold, "Irony", p. 87).

is focused on the well-being of the soul.³⁵ Though this is also true of the *Symposium*, in the next chapter we shall use the *Phaedrus* to explore this gesture on Plato's part to induct the reader into reflective thought, thereby seeking the well-being of the reader's soul as an act of love to enable him to seek true virtue. The *Phaedrus*, a late middle (or early late) dialogue, is fully engaged with the *poros*-dominant aspect of *eros* exemplifying Platonic irony in pursuit of the well-being of the soul of the reader.

D. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, though Kierkegaard in his distinction between the Socratic irony *versus* Platonic speculative thought provides an exaggerated and sometimes inaccurate contrast, through his analysis two potentialities of *eros* can be extracted. *Eros* has two strands, a *poros*-dominant strand and a *penia* dominant strand. The tendency of Socrates to affirm that he knows nothing, indicating a poverty or emptiness presupposed at the starting point of Socrates' inquiries in pursuit of wisdom and virtue, is at the heart of Socratic irony. Nonetheless within this *penia*-dominant tendency, which by focusing upon lack indicates a subversion of the *poros* strand in *eros*, the *poros* element of rational ability is always present and pointed to. Therefore, the true inverted irony of Socrates' thought lies in that while it seems to presuppose and be directed to *penia* hence to an *aporia*, this lack once acknowledged points beyond itself highlighting the reason element and an awareness of what it lacks, understanding and virtue etc., which move the thinker further along the path towards their acquisition. Hence it is through the exploration of lack that the path is opened so that the thinking moves beyond lack; hence the path of *penia*. In contrast through referring to Plato as exemplifying speculative thought presupposing fullness and moving towards it, Kierkegaard notes a genuine thrust of Plato's thought overall. The presence of a *poros*-

³⁵ "This strategy seems obviously connected with the notion that philosophical learning is a form of 'recollection', a kind of knowledge to be brought out by the learner 'from within'. Irony in its various guises, on both Socratic and Platonic levels, seems fairly obviously to be one way to compel the reader to rediscover on his or her own...an understanding of what it would mean to be a perfected, complete human being....The Platonic dialogues have an ethical point to make to the effect that the unexamined life is not worth living....We [should] understand 'the point' of irony as connected to Plato's wish to invite the reader into a life of self-examination." (Griswold, "Irony", p. 100)

dominant *eros* which acts as the overriding all-encompassing force, motivated by the belief in virtue and understanding, directs all elements in the dialogue towards the pursuit of virtue and understanding, hence the well-being of the reader's soul. Plato achieves this through his use of Platonic irony as we shall now see with regard to the *Phaedrus*. The site of negativity or the central *aporia* of the *Phaedrus* is the recantation. It is therefore here that we shall open the next phase of our discussion of Plato's understanding of the relation of *eros* and *aporia*, before examining the relation of the recantation to the text as a whole.

V. RECANTATION; SIMULTANEOUSLY THE MATRIX AND APORIA OF MEANING

The recantation creates a site or fold in the text through which the various speeches are reinterpreted and weighed against each other. Not only is it a site of meaning, a chameleon-like multiplicity of shifting interpretations, but through recanting and reversing the recantation produces an *aporia* of meaning, a liquidation of meaning which causes a continuous oscillation between meaning and lack of meaning, a movement between potential meanings which in turn points to a continual reinterpretation of the speeches and the dialogue as a whole.

After his first speech which he recited veiled Socrates, stopped by his divine sign/daimon,¹ recognizes that he has blasphemed against *Eros* by implying love is evil (*kakos*). That this is blasphemy becomes clear when we discover that for the Socrates of the *Phaedrus* Love is a god (242e3),² and as he is a god must therefore be good

¹The intervention of the *daimon* produces the recantation both formally and with regard to content. Formally, like Hackforth (p. 54), Rowe (p. 164) believes the divine sign “here is used essentially as a literary device, a kind of *deus ex machina* to explain the sudden reversal in the plot”. The entire scene is a theatrical production in which the “divine” sign is a dramatic device to manipulate Phaedrus into changing his view of love and philosophy. With regard to content, the *daimon* causes Socrates to experience guilt after his first speech for though he may not have “sinned” (Hackforth, p. 48), for the reason that he only formally reconstructed Lysias’ speech, a position opposed by Rowe who believes Socrates was committed to the contents of his first speech in that he recanted (p. 164, supported by c3), nonetheless he has led Phaedrus into error. Further, the *daimon* who only intervenes when Socrates has gone (*Phaedrus* 242c3-4) or is about to go (*Apology* 31c-d) wrong makes him recognize his error and correct it. “The action of the [‘divine’] sign is here only formally inhibitory: it forbids him to depart without making atonement, but in effect it commands him to make one” (Hackforth, p. 54). Nonetheless, though the sign awakens him to a recognition of error, Socrates is left to determine what is wrong and how to correct it (Rowe, p. 164). The divine is intervening and Socrates is being attentive to it, as if, following Rowe (p.164), it signifies simultaneously an amalgamation of divine admonition and conscience, the interweaving of the traditional and the Socratic.

²There seem to be many faces of *Eros* (and the gods) in Plato. The view that *Eros* is a god represented in the *Phaedrus* supports traditional Greek theology as expressed in Hesiod, *Theogony* 201. This view differs from the Socrates of the *Symposium*’s (201d) position that *Eros* is a *daimon*, and particularly from later Neo-Platonic readings such as Plotinus (where *Enneads* 3:5 represent an amalgamation of Hesiod, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*), in that in the *Phaedrus* love is divinely inspired. Rowe (p. 166) without perhaps adequately recognizing that Hackforth is referring to the *Symposium*, suggests that Hackforth tries to reconcile the two notions of *eros* through the *daimon-Eros* view, showing not that *Eros* is a god but that *eros* is of “divine origin” which seems to support the *Phaedrus* (242c3-4), love being “what belongs to the gods”. In Hackforth’s view (p. 55) however, Plato starts in the *Phaedrus* from a notion of divine possession, *mania*, which posits a personal divinity, which by the end of Socrates’ second speech has developed into a full conception of love as a progression. It can be argued however that the Platonic conception of *eros* is developing overall from the *Symposium*, in which *eros* as *daimon* expresses a progression towards the good, to *Eros* as god in the *Phaedrus*, expressing possession by a divinity. Though mentioned neither by Rowe nor by Hackforth, this progression can be seen not only as the personal development of Plato’s notion of *eros* (as we shall discuss with regard to Nussbaum), but more crucially as

(*Symposium* 202c, *Republic* 379a) and cannot be evil (*Phaedrus* 242e4), an understanding embodied in Socrates' second speech.

In this context, when comparing Socrates' two speeches we see Socrates presents contradicting *logoi*, the position implying that love is evil in his first speech *versus* the view that love is good and a god in his second speech. This may be interpreted as an ironic device consciously applied whereby Socrates uses his first speech in order to bring Phaedrus to the point of "accepting on his own terms the position of Socrates" (Griswold, "Irony", p. 92) expressed by Socrates' second speech, classified by Griswold as his fourth form of Socratic irony.

Recognizing that he has blasphemed against *Eros*, Socrates vacillates when trying to determine (or if taken as a gesture of irony, playing with the idea of) whom to blame. "I for my part am anxious to wash out the bitter taste, as it were, of the things we have heard" (243d3-4) with a sweet taste that will come from a positive speech on love. Though "bitter taste" marks the negative speech's source to be from within him (contrasting with Rowe, p. 164), Socrates speaks as if already distanced from this speech in that he speaks as if having only passively "heard" it, as if his mouth and ears did not belong to the same person, as if at the moment of the first speech he was divided from himself. Revealing that he feels it is from some source other than himself, he persists in trying to find someone to blame, Phaedrus (242e1; see also 238d5), Lysias (257b2), Pan and the Nymphs (263d5-6), the location (262d2-6), and the Cicadas (235c2-d3 and 262d2-6). In doing so Socrates, in contrast to his normal self which is rational and self-sufficient, taking personal responsibility for himself,³ represents himself as a subject upon which forces act, a victim, and ultimately blames the error on *mania*. This is particularly significant given the forthcoming role of the *mantis* in Socrates' second speech with regard to truth and purification, taking account of the claim in *Timaeus* (71e3-4) "No man, when in his wits, attains prophetic truth and inspiration".

As the soul or mind (*psuche*) has the power of divination according to Socrates, it

enacting the stages of the ascent to the beautiful in *Symposium* 210a-e, the transition being at line e1 which foreshadows the gap between the two dialogues, and represents that between the phase of seeking and that of receiving or even perhaps being sought. This reading partially resembles Markus' view of *eros* ("The Dialectic of *Eros* in Plato's *Symposium*," pp. 138-9), a lack progressing until it becomes an overflowing abundance, and is reminiscent of and underlies Lewis' initial division of types of loves (*Four Loves*, p. 7). Hackforth (p. 55) seeks to resolve the contradiction however: "The discrepancy, then, between the two dialogues may fairly be said to be due to the fact that in order to bring out two complementary (not contradictory) aspects of love it seemed natural to Plato to employ two different personifications of it, the "daemon" with his function as intermediary, and the god filling his worshipper with his own super-human, super-natural power."

³The contrast between Socratic *sophrosune* and *mania* will be explored in my discussion of Nussbaum's analysis of the recantation.

has the power to recognize or unveil the error, to recognize this offence as an offence. Socrates refers to himself in this context as a seer (242c4-6), attributing to the power of the seer the ability to recognize an offence (242c7-d3).⁴ This foreshadows the second type of *mania* in Socrates' second speech. The *mania* finds

“the necessary means of relief, by recourse to prayers and forms of service to the gods; as a result of which it hits upon secret rites of purification and puts the man who is touched by it out of danger both for the present and for the future, so finding a release from his present evils for one who is rightly maddened and possessed.” (Trans. Rowe 244e1-245a1)

Taking account of the transition between Socrates' first and second speeches, this suggests that one form of madness drives out another; a positive divine madness gives the *mantis* the power to drive out the negative madness due to “divine anger from some ancient cause” (244d7), perhaps supporting Robin's (*Phèdre*, xxxiv) comment, “*C'est l'admonition démonique qui a vraiment permis à Socrate de prendre enfin pleine conscience de son pêché. Il est donc difficile de ne pas voir là une coupe significative dans le développement du dialogue: a une inspiration qui vient d'en bas s'en substitue désormais une autre, qui vient d'en haut.*”⁵ Robin supports the role of Socrates as *mantis*, which Diotima likewise holds in *Symposium* 205d8-e1, in that he uncovers an ancient lack.

Moreover Barker (2002) notes that in the *Timaeus* 71d-72b, Plato distinguishes between *mantis* and *prophetes*, “the true and inspired *mantis* is ‘out of his mind’ (not *ennous*); his utterances are unclear even to himself, and need to be interpreted rationally” by the *prophetes*. “While he continues demented, he cannot judge of the visions which he sees or words which he utters... Only a man who has his wits can act or judge about himself and his affairs” (*Timaeus* 72a5-8). Thus the *mantis* needs an interpreter of his inspired madness. Though we have suggested that through irony Socrates tries to lead Phaedrus from the position of his first speech to that of his second speech, recanting one state of madness with another state of madness, he seems to defer the role of interpreter to first Phaedrus but then most definitely the reader in an effort to get him and us to consider for himself and ourselves what love is.

⁴He calls himself impious (242d7) and says he needs to purify himself (243a4). “That for offences against the gods, I win renown from all my fellow men’ but I realize my offence” (*hamartema*; half way between injustice and misfortune, c.f. Liddell and Scott) (*Phaedrus* 242d1-3; trans. Rowe).

⁵Hackforth (p. 54) disagrees with Robin's position with regard to the demonic influences because of Socrates' late references to the Nymphs and Pan (263D) and the final prayer to Pan (279B).

However Socrates, describing himself as a *mantis* of a lesser type⁶, is also being ironic. “I am a seer (*mantis*); not a very good one, but like people who are poor at reading and writing, merely good enough for my own purposes” (242c4-6; trans. Rowe). This comment is ironic as Socrates condemns writing (275d7-e6, 276a9), referring to the written word as a phantom (perhaps like Helen’s phantom that journeyed to Troy), and condemns the reading of texts as a means of acquiring knowledge (275a5-b4). As writing and reading pivot around the appearance of wisdom rather than true wisdom itself (275b4), to say he is a seer like these implies that he has the appearance of wisdom rather than wisdom itself, that he sees physically but does not see spiritually thus implying a form of subjective wisdom (242c6), an implication enjoined by the analogy with the “poor” reader. This expresses either humility, or irony in that only he is troubled by the trespass, which someone like Phaedrus who focuses on appearances⁷ overlooks. Though Socrates considers his sight dim like poor writing and reading, thus twice removed from the truth (*Republic X*), he sees and maintains his concern for the truth, thus maintaining his personal *aporia* that he does not know the truth, yet knows enough to know he does not know the truth (*Meno* 80d, Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony I*). Socrates is thus simultaneously recognizing that he sees and does not see.

Socrates, as a seer of the second type of *mania* (244e1-245a1), at this point in the text responds with an appropriate cure. Motivated by fear of the wrath of the god of love (243d3) he recants. He says, “I...must purify myself, and for those who offend in the telling of stories there is an ancient method of purification” (243a3-4; trans. Rowe). Socrates admits that he must be cleansed for telling an impious story. He recants through reciting verses by Stesichorus. In doing this however he tells or alludes to with, apparently, a significant degree of irony, and therein brings himself into relation to, another story which is likewise a partial untruth, impious in the moral sense.

Through the production of verse both Stesichorus and Homer lost their sight because of their defamation of Helen,⁸ yet unlike Homer, Stesichorus recanted because “as a true artist he understood” and wrote

False, false the tale:

Thou never didst sail in the well-decked ships

⁶ For Rowe (p. 165), the true “seer or diviner (*mantis*) possesses or claims to possess an insight into things which are obscure to ordinary men” involving the past, present and future, while he sees Socrates to be identifying himself as a lesser type of *mantis* since his error does not need a clairvoyant to detect it.

⁷ Ferrari (*Listing to the Cicadas*, pp. 4-9) refers to Phaedrus as an *impresario*.

⁸ According to de Vries, the *Life of Homer* confirms that both Homer and Stesichorus have the same source for their blindness.

Nor come to the towers of Troy. (243a8-b1; trans. Hackforth)

In reversing the story, Stesichorus received his sight back while Homer did not.

Many versions of this tale exist. In the Homeric version, Helen voluntarily is seduced by, abducted and taken back to Troy by Paris. When Stesichorus writes “false the tale”, he refers to his “roughly Homeric” account *Ἐλένη* (Bowra, p. 109; also see Lattimore, p. 483), the type of version which Greek youths memorized and enacted (*Republic* 3; cf. Hackforth, p. 26). In Stesichorus’ recantation, *Παλινωδία*, he denied that Helen went to Troy. It was “not Helen herself but her *εἶδωλον* or phantom” (Bowra, p. 110; Rowe, p. 166) that went to Troy.⁹ Herodotus in the *Histories*, published at most a decade before Euripides’ *Helen* (412 B.C.),¹⁰ recounts that according to the priest of the temple of Hephaestus in Memphis, Paris had “entered into the wife of [his] host... made her fly with [him] and stole her away” (Herodotus, trans. Godley, II, 115) but because of bad weather they were forced to land in Egypt. There, King Proteus of Memphis, being “deeply shocked”, detained both Helen and Menelaus’ property which Paris had stolen, until Menelaus could come to collect her. Following this line Nussbaum writes, “All during the war she was instead living peacefully and piously in Egypt” (*Fragility*, p. 212).

Herodotus was fully convinced that this version, given to him by the priests in Memphis, was authentic on rational grounds. “Had Helen been in Ilion, then with or without the will of Alexandrus [Paris] she would have been given back to the Greeks”. (Herodotus, trans. Godley, II, 120) The Trojans would never have endangered themselves, their children and city for such folly, particularly later after experiencing heavy losses including many of Priam’s sons. Furthermore as Hector, who was a better man, was heir, he would not have accepted “his brother’s wrong-doing...the cause of great calamity” to all. The Trojans did not hand over Helen as she was not “there to give back, yet though they spoke the truth the Greeks would not believe them”. (Herodotus, trans. Godley, II, 115) Although Herodotus in general is disputable,¹¹ this seems a rational alternative.

Herodotus was convinced that Homer was aware of this version of the story given

⁹ Jevons, *A History of Greek Literature*, p. 144. Lattimore describes Stesichorus as the “successor” to Hesiod who “apparently” in his lost works had earlier written that Helen’s phantom not the queen herself had journeyed to Troy. (R. Lattimore, “Introduction to Helen” in Euripides’ *Helen* in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, Volume 3, p. 483)

¹⁰ See Lattimore’s (p. 483) discussion of Herodotus, II, 115.

¹¹ Herodotus was known as the Father of history, as well as the Father of lies in that when evidence was lacking he recorded popular beliefs. See A. R. Burn, Introduction *The Histories*, pp. 28ff.

to him by the Egyptian priests. While Herodotus (Trans. Godley, II, 116) cites three short passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which refer to Egypt, *Odyssey* IV contains even more extensive evidence through its references to Egypt: *Odyssey* IV, 83, 128 (perhaps), 226-31, 618-19, and 352-585 which contains an imaginative and sly reinterpretation of Proteus (notably the King of Memphis who detained Helen) as a metamorphic, illusive, and prophetic sorcerer, who tells Menelaus to return to Egypt to make proper sacrifices, an allusion to Menelaus' actual offence against Proteus by his illicit sacrifices prior to his departure from Egypt (Herodotus, trans. Godley, II, 119). Therefore though Homer seems to have been aware of the version of "the Egyptian priests," he chose not to use it but represented Helen in Troy and (if Herodotus is accurate) deliberately ventured from "the truth" under the auspice of artistic licence (II, 116).

Homer, however, represents the standard reading, and even if we hold to Herodotus' account, seen in another way there is some truth in Homer's version. In permitting Paris to abduct her, her heart and her *eros* were in Troy,¹² "for it is obvious that no young woman allows herself to be abducted if she does not wish to be".¹³ In this context the phantom represents her heart directed toward the object of her desire which caused her to sail for and reside in Troy though she was physically detained in Egypt. Therefore regardless of her presence in Egypt, that her heart desired to go to Troy caused her to abandon her home which caused her husband and the rest of the Achaeans to leave their lands and make war on Troy. Thus it is her piety which begins to appear the phantom. Here lies the shame of the Greeks, that Troy was where she desired to be, and therefore analogically where she was.¹⁴

Others like Gorgias and Euripides strive to reduce Helen's blame through argument and rhetoric. Gorgias maintaining that Helen went to Troy in "In Praise of Helen"¹⁵ endeavors to clear Helen through rational argument involving what seems to be

¹² As Gorgias ironically argues in *Encomium of Helen* 19 (Trans. D.M. MacDowell), "So if Helen's eye, pleased by Alexander's body, transmitted an eagerness and striving of love to her mind, what is surprising? If love is a god with a god's power, how would the weaker be able to repel and resist it? But if it is a human malady and incapacity of mind, it should not be blamed as an impropriety but considered as an adversity; for it comes, when it does come, through deceptions of mind, not intentions of thought, and through compulsions of love, not contrivances of skill."

¹³ Herodotus, trans. de Sélincourt. I, 4. A statement clearly not universally true but defensible in this particular case.

¹⁴ M. Heidegger in "Building Dwelling and Thinking" (*Basic Writings*, p. 335) discusses the power of thought in similar terms as this manner of conceiving desire. "From right here we may even be much closer to that bridge and to what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river crossing."

¹⁵ In Gorgias' "In Praise of Helen", though he believes Helen went to Troy, Gorgias systematically tries to "refute those who rebuke Helen", whom he considered to have become "a memorial of disasters" (Gorgias, p. 284), exemplified in *Agamemnon* 689 in which Aeschylus plays upon the name Helen writing "Hell to

rationalization and blame-shifting. Euripides strives “to remove the stain of dishonour” attached to Helen in his tragedy *Helen* by mixing two versions of the tale; that of Herodotus and that of Stesichorus, affirming both. Her phantom image goes to Troy while she is spirited away to Egypt. Although “he used the Herodotean variant, he contrived, through the old idol-story, to remove that stain of dishonor which the Egyptian version had re-attached to Helen [while exploiting]...the tragic futility of that utterly unnecessary Trojan War” (Lattimore, p. 484), thereby manipulating history to a specific end.

However, by stating that neither did Helen “sail in the well-decked ships” nor did she “come to the towers of Troy”, Stesichorus betrays ulterior motives. Socrates refers to the story concerning the alleged blinding of Stesichorus after his *Ἐλένη* placed Helen in a bad light, seen an act of *hubris*. “Blinding is typically, though not exclusively, associated with offences against the gods”, according to Buxton (Rowe, p. 167). Helen, daughter of Tyndareus of Sparta was considered to be the daughter of Zeus who transformed into a swan to fool her mother Leda.¹⁶ Helen, married to Menelaus, is represented in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* as a mortal (Rowe, p. 166). However as Helen was the daughter of Zeus, her husband Menelaus through his connection with her upon his death went to dwell in the Elysian plain (*Odyssey* IV, 563-70), and she “had cults, at Sparta and elsewhere,¹⁷ apparently as a goddess.”¹⁸ Thus given this understanding of the nature of Helen, Homer has offended a goddess and is punished as he does not recant, whereas Stesichorus recants thereby alleviating the wrath of the gods and receives back his sight.¹⁹ Regardless of whether the blinding of Stesichorus seems folkloric to us (Bowra, p. 108),

ships, hell to men, hell to the city” (see note 1, p. 284); this of course is a paraphrase—the play in Greek is between *Ἐλένη* and *Ἐλέναυς*. Gorgias writes in his Epilogue (*Encomium of Helen* 19. Trans. D.M. MacDowell), “So how should one consider the blame of Helen just? Whether she did what she did because she was enamoured <by sight> or persuaded by speech or seized by force or compelled by divine necessity, in every case she escapes the accusation. I have removed by my speech a woman’s infamy, I have kept to the purpose which I set myself at the start of my speech; I attempted to dispel injustice of blame and ignorance of belief, I wished to write the speech as an encomium of Helen and an amusement for myself.” With regard to the last word “recreation” in note 10 we are reminded that the Greek word used was *paignion*, ‘sport, play’ (see Rutherford, p. 243). Thus, at the end Gorgias plays at “undercutting a serious purpose in the speech”. However, writing playful arguments does not mean that he does not take his arguments seriously. See Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric*, Ch. 2, pp. 50-51.

¹⁶Euripides, *Helen*, lines 17-21, 48.

¹⁷Herodotus (2: 112) reports the temple of Athena the stranger in Memphis as being dedicated to Helen.

¹⁸Rowe, p. 167. Rowe citing Buxton’s reading of Plato (“Blindness and Limits: Sophocles and the Logic of Myth”, p. 22) maintains that Plato appears to treat Helen as a goddess, pointing to the comparison between Stesichorus and Socrates.

¹⁹ Given that Plato, as we have seen in Chapter I, referring both to *Republic* book 2 and *Symposium* 203, sees the limitations of the Greek conception of the gods, this can be read as a tongue in cheek allusion to Plato’s moralizing attitude towards the Greek gods suggesting he too should be blinded.

it appears to be punishment for *hubris* though simultaneously this reference may be in part ironic, pointing to a political offence.²⁰

This tale opens a contradiction with regard to the relation between piety and integrity. Plato calls Stesichorus a *mousikos*, (243a8) “a true follower of the Muses” (Rowe) or “as a true artist he understood” (Hackforth). If the Herodotean account is credited, Homer intentionally disregarded the true Egypt story as it “did not suite epic poetry as [well as] the tale of which he made use” (II, 116). In recanting the Homeric version Stesichorus went against tradition in correcting a fictitious tale and was honest according to Herodotus to this extent. However he went further in that by recanting the version that judged and brought dishonour to Helen, he flattered the gods contending that she never went to Troy nor even boarded the boats in contrast to the other variants.²¹ Therefore as a true artist and follower of the Muses²² he created a version to please and honour the gods, whatever the cost to his personal integrity, which healed his sight through undoing that action by which he had originally committed *hubris*.

In contrast, Rowe (p. 167) refers to Homer as “the leader of the tragic, i.e. “serious” poets.” The Socrates of the *Republic* (598d9-e2) states “Have we not to scrutinize tragedy and its leader Homer, since some people tell us that these poets know all the arts and all things human pertaining to virtue and vice and all things divine?” This stance represents a historical position prior to Socrates which brought together the poet, the philosopher and the seer, a valuing of the poet which the Socrates of the *Republic* (X) and the *Ion* sought to undermine and which he claimed to have disproved in the *Apology* 22. Nonetheless in this context this suggests that Homer is both poet and philosopher in his concern for and knowledge of the truth, and is morally irreproachable, *sophos*. This implies that he will tell the whole truth about Helen, regardless of personal consequences. However Herodotus’ reasoning (II, 116-120) and the references in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*

²⁰ Stesichorus in the *Ἐλένη* fr. 17d. discusses the punishment of Tyndareus, father of Helen, due to his omission of a sacrifice to Aphrodite. Aphrodite in her wrath “made [the daughters of Tyndareus] to be wed twice and thrice and to forsake their husbands”. Furthermore Pausanias (2.22.6) refers to a story by Stesichorus which indicates that Helen had an illegitimate child with Theseus prior to marrying Menelaus. As one or both of these stories would have caused great offence to Sparta, particularly as Helen had “festivals and special duties” and where a “particular glory” attributed to her would have been appropriate, Bowra (p. 111) concludes that this Stesichorus palinode was written to pacify the Spartans, deifying Helen and recanting what he had previously said for political reasons. On a different level, Plato’s reference can be read as pointing towards the fact that like Stesichorus Socrates could have recanted his alleged impiety towards the state gods and survived, but like Homer chose not to and suffered. On some level, Stesichorus seems to have bent the truth to smooth over a political offence.

²¹ He is one of the few if not the only poet who fully vindicates Helen from all guilt saying that she never even left Sparta.

²² The Muses are associated with Apollo the god of healing. On some level Stesichorus’ palinode acted as medical potion or a counter-spell, recalling the second form of *mania* in Socrates’ second speech.

to the Egyptian version suggest that despite this claim to virtue and wisdom Homer, knowing the inherent ambiguities and disputes with regard to Helen still composed an elaborate tale situating her in Troy, while alluding to her residence in Egypt, both stories which inevitably have negative implications as to her moral character. Though Homer may have been honest with regard to her physical location, or simply truthful with regard to Helen's inner motivations and intentions, nonetheless he shamed Helen, daughter of Zeus and therefore was blinded for *hubris* and impiety.

Socrates' citing "False, false the tale" seems to reflect back on all possible readings of the Helen story creating a sense of uncertainty as to what is true and what is false. Although, then, on these accounts, while each poet reveals some aspect of the truth, each through his story simultaneously conceals truth or is on some level hubristic and/or impious. Furthermore according to this theological scheme, the "offenders" of the corrupt anthropomorphic gods' pride, who acknowledge, represent and judge their imperfection, must be blinded, while those who flatter them regain their sight.²³ This indicates an ethical contradiction: he who tells pious stories in speaking the truth is condemned/blinded while he who wants to be purged of blindness/the wrath of the gods must deceive, in order to be pious with regard to the gods.²⁴

Moreover, through Socrates' citation of Stesichorus we find ourselves faced with the fallibility of our understanding of the story of Helen itself. Although in the context of the multiple and conflicting versions of the Helen story, the Herodotus version seems to present the most plausible account, there is no way to prove that what Stesichorus recounts in his palinode was untrue particularly in that this "truth" pertains to epic legend, an issue relevant to, and pointed to by Herodotus concerning, Homer's construction of his epic. What is important is not whether Stesichorus or Homer told the "factual" truth but whether Socrates believed Stesichorus told the truth, or thought he did, as this has significance in the context in which he cites him. Given that Plato does not make this apparent, Socrates' very statement thrust us into the heart of the ambiguities and uncertainties with regard to the reading of Stesichorus and by consequence that of

²³To see spiritually, to be a *mantis*, results in blindness physically, exemplified not only by Homer, but also by Oedipus and Teiresias in *Oedipus the King*, while spiritual blindness produces physical light, as demonstrated by Stesichorus. If this opposition between sight and blindness is read in relation to Nussbaum's discussion of the dichotomy of *mania* and *sophrosune* in the middle dialogues, it can be interpreted as the inability to focus on the physical and spiritual simultaneously, as if physical sight excludes the possibility of spiritual vision while mental vision demands and results in a negation or cutting off of the physical body, a point demonstrated in the "Myth of the Cave," (*Republic* 518c6-7) with regard to the necessity of "turning one's whole body" from the darkness to light.

²⁴For a sustained analysis of contradictory moral systems in aesthetics see Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Volume II, "Greek Comedy and Tragedy" with reference to *Antigone*.

Homer, which in turn opens the question of alternative versions such as those of Herodotus, Euripides and Gorgias. By emphasizing the uncertainties concerning the facts behind the Helen legend, consequentially causing various poets' piety to recede into the background, the citing of Stesichorus by Socrates becomes increasingly enigmatic and rife with possible contradictory meanings and hence aporetic, allowing no passage. This uncertainty in turn reflects back on the nature of love pointing to its ambiguity.

In the same vein as Stesichorus, trying to beat the game, Socrates states "I shall show greater wisdom than these poets: I shall attempt to make my due palinode to Love before any harm comes to me for my defamation of him, and no longer veiling my head for shame, but uncovered" (243B). Thus in the spirit of Stesichorus, Socrates recants his blasphemy against love, claiming instead that love is a god and man's greatest good (248d4, 249d4-e1). While Socrates may be recanting to honour the god of love as Stesichorus recanted to honour Helen daughter of Zeus, suggesting that both are blameless and untainted, simultaneously the multiplicity of conflicting accounts of Helen raises further doubts. Stesichorus' recantation could reasonably be considered by Plato's readers to open a nest of uncertainties concerning both the Helen "stories" and the poets responsible for the versions, variants which undermine each other leaving the reader in an *aporia* of meaning as to whether Socrates by saying "false the tale" really means the tale is true. This in turn reflects upon Socrates' speeches creating an ironic reversal suggesting that Socrates' first speech may be true while Socrates' second speech is false, hence love may actually be bad as opposed to good and a god. This suggests that Socrates' two speeches may be either true or false and consequentially that love may be either good or bad, indicating that in both speeches whether not recanting, recanting, or recanting the recantation, Socrates is telling a partial or uncertain truth concerning the nature of love. This returns us to his ironic statement, "I am a seer; not a very good one" (242c4-5), ironic particularly as he claims that the only thing he understands is love (*Symposium* 177d9-e1).

This recantation or reversal acts in two directions. The recantation formally recants Socrates' first speech. Socrates claims to have sinned against *Eros* through showing the negative side of *eros*. However through the reference to the story of Stesichorus, which is uncertain and opens conflicting meanings, Socrates implies that his recantation is likewise uncertain and rife with contradictions hence aporetic. In so doing, Socrates and also, it seems, Plato, recants the recantation. This creates an *aporia* between the first and the second speech, simultaneously suggesting that each is true and false,

indicating a more objective *aporia* of interpretation.²⁵ Adding a further level of difficulty, if we take it that the accounts of Stesichorus and Homer may be each both true and false, then it would seem that each of Socrates' speeches are partially true and false, both true and false. Furthermore, the motivation behind the recantation is piety, yet it seems uncertain whether piety can be achieved through recanting nor through recanting the recantation, which likewise leaves Socrates, Plato and the reader in an *aporia*; at which point, one may ask, where does the true blindness lie? Thus while maintaining its role as a matrix of meaning, the recantation simultaneously induces an evacuation/confusion of meaning, as in an *aporia* the individual necessarily knows that he does not know but does not know what he does not know which indicates a position of partial knowledge, a position between knowledge and ignorance (*Symposium* 202). This leaves the question of meaning concerning love in flux and therefore open to possible reinterpretation, calling the reader to be interpreter.

²⁵If the reversal had been complete, as would have been the case if Stesichorus fully lied and Homer's version had been the historical truth (a position put in serious question by Herodotus), then this would have produced an *aporia* resulting in a complete evacuation of meaning, similar to but more intense than the technique used by Socrates as demonstrated by Plato's early dialogues, the method for which Socrates was ultimately condemned to death. However, given the presence not of absolutes but of half truths, recantation after the manner of Stesichorus does not produce a desperate inner void (except as a part of or a moment in the process) though still resulting in an *aporia* of meaning with regard to the truth. As elements of the truth are present in each version as in each speech, this *aporia* leaves the reader with the objective belief that truth is possible, that there is a way out of the *aporia*, which is much more in keeping with Platonic thought and indeed with the later commentary at 266a.

VI.

THE TALE OF NUSSBAUM

Nussbaum reads this recantation as a redefinition of *eros* transcending the dichotomy of *sophrosune* and *mania*, good and evil, into a constitutive element of an orderly and pious life. Though the setting of the *Phaedrus* is dated normally between 411 and 404 B.C., according to an inscription found in this century, Phaidros Murrhinousios was implicated with Alcibiades for the desecration of the statues of Hermes and the Mysteries (as discussed by Sayre pp. 120-122) and was accordingly sent into exile from 415 to 404 B.C. For Nussbaum accordingly, he was not in Athens at the time the dialogue is set. Viewed not as inconsistency nor a “tale” because of the “notoriety of the events and the precision with which Plato dates the dialogue” (*Fragility*, p. 212), Nussbaum reads the *Phaedrus* as

Plato’s own Egypt-legend. That story wasn’t true. You did not get led into disorder and impiety through your appetitive passions, your devotion to *mania*. You did not go into exile. All the time in spite of appearances, here you were in Athens, living a good and orderly life, and living a good life without closing off the influence of *eros*.¹ (*Fragility*, p. 212-3)

According to this interpretation, *eros* does not necessitate impiety and irrational conduct, *mania*, as is implied by Nussbaum’s interpretation of the *Symposium*’s portrayal of Alcibiades with regard to Socrates. Though Phaedrus² and Alcibiades went into exile due to the misuse of *eros*, and though Stesichorus could well have believed Helen did go to Troy, the nature of *eros* did not determine their negative moral choices and therefore did not necessitate the tragic ends of Alcibiades, Phaedrus and Helen. The negative end was not determined through the presence of *eros*, indicating that *eros* is not exclusively

¹ Nussbaum seems to have missed Plato’s apparently deliberate ambiguity in his use of Stesichorus; that Helen may not have gone to Troy and that she might have been living “peacefully and piously in Egypt”. Clearly she could not have reached Egypt nor left Sparta without *eros*, as Herodotus’ report of the priest in Egypt makes clear (nor for that matter gone to Troy). This does not affect the point she wishes to make concerning *eros* with regard to the recantation. However, it would prevent her from calling the *Phaedrus* “Plato’s own Egypt-Legend”, as a clear indication that Plato’s view has changed, because Stesichorus’ tale is ambiguous, this version is neither true nor false but indeterminate in regard to truth and falsity. This however draws into question Nussbaum’s understanding of *eros*, particularly with regard to *mania*.

² “We know virtually nothing of Phaedrus outside the pages of Plato.” (Hackforth, p. 12)

negative. Therefore, “both Plato’s *Phaedrus*-legend and Stesichorus’s Egypt-legend attack the deep moral that has been drawn from Helen and Alcibiades. They claim that, although perhaps literally false, their stories will express, metaphorically, a deeper truth about *eros*: that it can be a constituent of an orderly and pious life dedicated to the understanding of the good” (*Fragility*, p. 213),³ which supports the claim that *eros* is a necessary ingredient of the best kind of life (248d4, 249d4-e1). Illustrated by the description of the charioteer in Socrates’ second speech, *eros* when controlled in a philosophic love relation leads toward the good and beautiful (253e6-254e9, 256a7-b7), and is the only hope the soul has of attaining immortality as *eros* for the particular individual causes the wings of the soul to grow, which enables the soul to contemplate the Forms. This type of controlled *eros* as an essential part of the philosophic life is already present in the middle dialogues as demonstrated in *Republic* 403b as well as through our discussion of Socrates in the *Symposium* as the example of philosophical *eros*, seeking to procreate virtue in others hence seeking the well-being of their souls.

A. *SOPHROSUNE VERSUS MANIA*

Nussbaum, however, argues that with the *Phaedrus* Plato’s conception of love radically changes. What for her had appeared to be a dichotomy in the middle dialogues is now expressed as a more complex synthesis of elements. For Nussbaum, Lysias’ and Socrates’ opening speeches set up the straight dichotomy of rational/good *contra* irrational/evil (implicitly opposing Hackforth) which she associates with the middle dialogues while the second speech, following a recantation of Plato’s past views supporting the *sophrosune/mania* dichotomy, redefines love as madness inspired by the gods (245c1-2) and a state of the highest goodness for man (248d4, 249d4-e1). This new thesis represented in Socrates’ second speech, which Nussbaum considers to be Plato’s ultimate position, indicates that as philosophy is a type of *mania*, *mania* is necessary for the pursuit of the truth as is the individual love relationship which in turn produces the

³ This analysis of *eros* and of Alcibiades’ desecration echoes Sayre’s analysis (pp. 120-122) which we have previously discussed. Strangely, as previously noted, Nussbaum makes no mention of Sayre in her bibliography to *The Fragility of Goodness*.

best kind of life.⁴ Thus *mania*, erotic love relationships and philosophy are inter-linked in the pursuit of truth.

Already however we see a problem here in that the conception of *eros* in the middle dialogues is far more complex than she acknowledges.⁵ As we saw in Chapter 3, the Plato of the *Symposium* has difficulty with “Dionysian” *mania*, uncontrolled *eros*, which he opposes with the Apollonian position favouring reason and *sophrosune*. Again, at *Republic* 402d ff., after agreeing that beauty of the soul is better, fairer and more lovable than beauty of the body, reminiscent of *Symposium* 211, Socrates discusses the opposition of “sobriety” and “virtue” with “extravagant pleasure”, “insolence and licence” and sex. Socrates then opposes uncontrolled erotic *mania* with the “right love, a sober and harmonious love of the orderly and the beautiful” which is “directed towards honourable ends” and involves *sophrosune* and physical purity. Thus we see in the *Republic* that Plato already resolves the dichotomy of *sophrosune* and *mania* through a form of philosophical *eros* governed by *sophrosune*.

In what Nussbaum conceives of as a new thesis on *eros* found in Socrates’ second speech of the *Phaedrus*, which as we have seen above is not so new, *eros* directed towards the individual contradicts Vlastos’ critique of Plato’s conception of the love of the individual. Rather than being loved for their “utility value” according to “utility love” (Vlastos, “Individual”, p. 7), in so far as they are “the images of the Ideas in them”, “congeries of valuable qualities” (Vlastos, pp. 31-2) and not loved for their “own sake”

⁴ *Fragility*, p. 201.

⁵ Nussbaum gives an oversimplified reading of this shift from the *Symposium*’s dichotomy to the *Phaedrus*, in that there is not a straight dichotomy in the *Symposium* since reason and madness are interrelated. This is brought out by Cobb’s comment that “The association of Socratic dialectic with the Bacchic enthusiasms of the Corybantes may be a bit startling (215e), but this association of what we may think of as religious inspiration and enthusiasm with Socratic rational enquiry is common in the dialogues” (Cobb p. 83). Complexifying this further, 212a4 alludes to “the tale of Ixion and the cloud which was imposed on him in the place of Hera, and from which the Centaurs sprang” (A. E. Taylor p. 230 note 1). Also, “Socrates explicitly appeals to religious motivation in his defence of himself in the *Apology*”. One could also argue that the intellectual ascent could occur through the possession by *eros*, the ascent involving as Moravcsik points out the interaction of reason, *eros* and creation. This shows that “Perhaps Plato does not think of this element of the religious as something antithetical to the rational. The appeal of the beautiful occurs at many levels, not just at the level of intellectual analysis” (Cobb, p. 83). The *Symposium*, it would seem, does not comply fully with Nussbaum’s reading of the dichotomy. Furthermore, Nussbaum’s dichotomy can be read, with Cobb, as breaking down with the entry of Alcibiades. “This outburst of drunken revelry in the dialogue, the introduction of the aspect of madness that will be connected with love in the *Phaedrus*... [is] explicit in Alcibiades’ description of Socrates and the effect Socrates has on him. In the famous image at 218b he compares the impact of Socrates’ arguments to the bite of a snake that will not loose and speaks of ‘the madness and Bacchanalian frenzy of philosophy’”. (Cobb, p. 82)

(Vlastos, pp. 3, 5, 32), for Nussbaum from Socrates' second speech onward individuals are loved uniquely and specifically in a non-transferable way.⁶ In Chapter III we cast doubt on Nussbaum's judgement of Plato through showing how in the *Symposium* Socrates, representing philosophical *eros*, strives to procreate virtue in youths in view of eternity, seeking the well-being of their and his own souls. The difference between the conception of philosophical *eros* found in the *Symposium* and the *Republic* compared with that of Socrates' second speech simply involves the intensification of certain elements in the latter as we shall see. While resembling the understanding of *eros* as desire of the unique beloved in Aristophanes' speech (191d1-6), though not perceived as blocked and fixated like Alcibiades' obsession with Socrates (219d2-e5), Nussbaum believes that love of an individual in Socrates' second speech is conceived of as a growing and moving relation/interaction. This involves participants appreciated for their intrinsic value who are developing as a product of their historical inscription, their passage through time and space, and their growing awareness of each other and themselves through the other.⁷ By this she maintains that the individual for the first time in Plato's *Phaedrus* does maintain a significant value and is not expendable, though as we have demonstrated this was to a certain extent true all along.

There are various problems associated with Nussbaum's reading⁸ in which she seems to be "appropriating the *Phaedrus*", using it to support her own agenda. Among these, she focuses upon the empirical relationship of the lovers as opposed to the ascent through *eros* fostered by virtue to the Forms. Differing somewhat from Nussbaum, however, the lovers of the *Phaedrus* see their journey as an ascent or movement towards virtue in which, continuing after death, the inspiration of *eros* fostered with intellectual and moral enlightenment (256b3) (virtue: *sophrosune*) causes the regrowth of their wings (256b4) and the ascent to the Forms (246d6). This is particularly important because, in the text of the *Phaedrus*, Plato shows a clear coupling and interweaving of *sophrosune* and *mania* which does seek to resolve the dichotomy. Nussbaum however, although she

⁶ *Fragility*, p. 218.

⁷ Also see Lacan, "Mirror Phase" (*Ecrit 1*, pp. 1-3) compared to *Phaedrus* 255b-e, Rowe p. 88, and Hackforth, p. 108.

⁸ The value of Nussbaum's account is not dependent upon the accuracy of her reading/her fidelity to the text, but in the fact that she addresses the subject of the recantation directly and in the questions she poses which open areas up for exploration in a new light.

acknowledges this, favours the empirical relation even though such weight is not present in the text.

Also her understanding of divinity within the individual stresses difference as opposed to unity. Although illustrating an important shift from a movement towards self-sufficiency to one that attributes value to the individual as a source of insight, this section seems to show a using of the *Phaedrus* to support her own agenda. Implicitly Nussbaum in her analysis of the *Phaedrus* (see *Fragility*, p. 218)⁹ concerning the “divinity” within the other, which for her seems to be the essence of the other person, likewise focuses not so strongly on the similarity of the lovers and increasing unity in their devotion to each other in seeking immortality, but on their awareness and appreciation of essential differences. Nussbaum conceives the “divinity” in the other person, as not so much what god they resemble (*Phaedrus* 252e1-253b4) or their ideal, but what is unique about them, what they are in themselves, which determines their particular responses and interactions. The basic distinction observed here is Nussbaum’s implicit tracing of different divinities in the other and the self, as opposed to a Platonic notion of divinity in which divinity is a unity operating in different ways, causing unity in that in which it operates. Thus, the divine, rather than being universal finding its source in the Forms, focuses on particularization or individual manifestation of beauty and virtue. Knowing the particular beloved fully leads the lover to trace the divinity in himself, by which Nussbaum seems to mean knowing his ideal, what is good and beautiful, to what he attributes value, rather than a metaphysical reality.

Although there seems to be some connection for Nussbaum leading from the lover’s understanding of the beloved to the lover’s understanding of himself, the essences

⁹ She writes in this context, “Not least of the lover’s learning is learning about another person. Each, through complex responses and interactions, comes we are told, to understand and honor the ‘divinity’ of the other person (252D); his effort is to know the other’s character through and through. This leads, further, to increased self-understanding, as they ‘follow up the trace within themselves of the nature of their god’. In his state of possession (252E), the lover learns the other person’s ‘habits and ways’, and through these his own (252E-253A)... But some of their truths may well be more particular and more like stories. If we ask what sort of understanding this is and what truths the lovers can tell, we get a complicated answer. No doubt they will know some general truths about character of a certain type and some of their knowledge of habits and ways may reveal itself not so much in speeches as in the intuitive understanding of how to act towards the other person, how to teach, how to respond, how to limit oneself. But Socrates (like Alcibiades of the *Symposium*) insists that it is insight nonetheless, insight crucial to moral and intellectual development. The lover owes gratitude for his insight to the beloved, whom gratitude causes him to love more. Once ‘looking to the lover’ was opposed to looking to philosophy (239A-B). Now the lover’s soul is a central source of insight and understanding, both general and concrete.” (*Fragility*, p. 218)

of the two individuals appear to be distinctly different though historically connected and participating in each other's becoming. Nussbaum refers to the other person's "habits and ways" as if they belong to the other person primarily, deriving from his essence. In the text (253a4), these are of a god, though the lover "attributes it to the beloved" implying that he mistakes their source and idealizes his beloved and is inspired by his beauty which he in turn pours back into the beloved. This justifies to some extent Nussbaum's comment on the gratitude the lover feels, though this gratitude is for insight into his god and into the form of beauty, though this is not apparent in her discussion.

Therefore though Nussbaum does suggest in accordance with the text an understanding of similarity and commonality in relation to the common god of the lover and beloved (252d1-6, e1) and the attributes they have in common with that god which makes them attracted to each other (252d5-6, 253a5), this notion of divinity appears to integrate a greater degree of difference than is present in the text. A major problem with Nussbaum's understanding of "divinity" or essence in the individual in its purest form is that it seems to refer to a difference rather than a unity.¹⁰

As the individual is not fully acknowledged to be chosen as beloved for his likeness to the patron god nor as a reflection of Beauty, Nussbaum stresses particularity too strongly. This analysis by Nussbaum (p. 216) is problematic as she, through

¹⁰ Nussbaum's reading of Plato in her interpretation of love of the individual seems to be coloured by feminist writers on difference such as Helena Cixous, specifically "The Laugh of the Medusa". Cixous writes the lover "does not 'know' what she is giving", nor does she measure it, meaning that her love is not governed by reason. Though both Plato and Cixous believe that love is the desire for that which the beautiful effects, Nussbaum's interpretation of divine madness, *mania*, in the *Phaedrus* is much closer to Cixous' "desire that gives", and irrational selfless generosity as when Nussbaum writes, "Without the generosity of madness, the soul is imprisoned not in the body but within itself and therein devoid of love's colour and insight in some way" (*Fragility*, p. 221). Plato's understanding of erotic madness is always based on a rational foundation, self-controlled. Furthermore, Plato's understanding of *eros* is always directed towards unity, as we see in the ascent of Diotima's speech and in the ascending relationship of the lovers in Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus* tending towards a greater unity. Cixous' understanding is a relation of difference that intentionally maintains the difference. Nussbaum in her analysis of the *Phaedrus* concerning the "divinity" within the other, or the essence of the other person, likewise focuses not so strongly on their similarity and increasing unity in their devotion to each other in seeking immortality, but on their awareness and appreciation of essential differences. Thus Nussbaum, with regard to madness and difference, seems to read contemporary and feminist concerns into her interpretation of the *Phaedrus*.

I mention Cixous for the reason that the title "The Laugh of the Medusa", 1976, written approximately ten years prior to *The Fragility of Goodness*, seems to be echoed in Nussbaum's more recent book *The Therapy of Desire* in the seemingly autobiographical chapter "Serpents of the Soul". Both Cixous's paper and Nussbaum's chapter address in different ways the problems of *eros* and self-sufficiency, showing that even if Nussbaum had not read Cixous' article, which seems unlikely, they address similar concerns.

personalizing the love relation of Socrates' second speech, appears to have deviated from Plato's text. This straying is made evident by her pointed stress on the individual, neglecting the fact that the individual is not only chosen as an image of the patron god 252e, but that the beauty of the individual is above all a reflection of the form of the beautiful (250d, 254a-e).¹¹ Through focusing almost exclusively on the particular in reaction to the traditional readings, she swings to the opposite extreme, giving a partial reading in terms of particularity.

Through this emphasis on particularity, she misses the framework of the Forms and ascent to the Forms hence the movement towards unity as contrasted with difference.¹² Though she seems to view this ingredient of difference as new compared with the earlier dialogues, it has always been an integral component of Platonic thought in that the movement towards the Forms occurs through *anamnesis* which involves dialectical activity which is based on the interaction of two individuals and therefore difference.¹³ Nonetheless, regardless of her over-simplified view in the middle dialogues,

¹¹ See Ficino, *Plato on Love*, 2:6; also Watson, *Greek Philosophy*, pp. 24-5 for analysis of the assimilation of forms to the Judeo-Christian God.

¹² Furthermore, she seems to miss the Platonic framework of the Forms and the ascent to the Forms behind/underlying/informing the empirical world which gives order to the Platonic world. The ascent to the Forms is a movement towards unity, whether concerning Ideas or whether conceived of as a metaphysical unity, pure being (while the Forms are not unitary, it can be argued that their source is the form of the good; see A. E. Taylor pp. 230-231; and Plotinus, *Enneads* 6. 9). This movement towards unity is categorized as a movement towards pure being and truth while multiplicity is grouped with semblance, falsehood, ignorance and becoming. Thus in Nussbaum's movement away from unity into multiplicity, semblance and becoming, for the Platonist she is moving into falsehood and ignorance regardless of whether the dialogue is middle or late. Although Plato expresses an awareness and respect for difference as other in the *Phaedrus* contrasted with the *Symposium*, in the *Phaedrus* Plato seems to place a much greater emphasis on likeness and unity than Nussbaum suggests, difference being an engaging and motivational aspect of the greater unity. For this reason, Nussbaum seems to be weaving her own concerns for difference into the text, formulating perhaps her own dialectic with and from Plato. (Warner notes Nussbaum's tendency to weave herself into the *Phaedrus* with regard to philosophical *mania* and a transformation of the senses ("Appropriating the *Phaedrus*", p. 12). He does not in this context mention Nussbaum's self-abandonment to multiplicity which tears away or at least causes a rift with with Plato's pursuit of unity.)

¹³ Contrary to Nussbaum's reading of the *Phaedrus* and its overdrawn contrast with earlier dialogues, difference had long been an intrinsic component of Platonic thought with regard to learning through the other. Learning through the dialectical relationship is fundamentally Platonic, a tendency fully present in Socrates' second speech; virtually all his texts are dialogues and wisdom, gained through *anamnesis*, is a process involving a dialectical activity. Learning through the other is not new in the *Phaedrus* but was always already present, indicating that self-sufficiency was never a possibility unless as with Kierkegaard it is achieved through deflation and irony. In the *Phaedrus*, the lovers' souls are the source of insight, not because of their essential difference but because of *anamnesis*; this disrupts Nussbaum's thesis that the recantation of the *Phaedrus* shows the change from self-sufficiency to the individual being the source of insight, for in a sense he always was.

Barker (2002) notes that this is supported in the *Gorgias* through Socrates' effort to induce or

she does recognize that the philosophical pursuit involves the integration of *sophrosune* and *mania* in the *Phaedrus*.

This integration is “complex” in that it involves multiple kinds of knowing and learning incorporating both the particular instance and a desire for the universal,¹⁴ which Nussbaum undervalues. In this pursuit of truth, philosophical truths are reached or striven for through dialectical structures, forming multiple dialectical relations on all the levels; not only intellectual but emotional, which Nussbaum categorizes as spirited,¹⁵ and appetitive, which together point to the importance of the individual and particular relation as fundamental. Interpersonal relations contaminate what she conceives of as the “hygienic purity” of the *sophrosune/mania* dualism in that understanding is connected to the appetitive in general and the spirited parts; *mania*, emotion and physicality cross over

“convert” Callicles into following philosophy. See *Gorgias* 481c-482c for a discussion of the relationship of love of philosophy and love of Alcibiades which in Chapter IV we contrasted with Callicles’ love for Demos son of Purlampes and the Athenian demos hence “political power”. The role of difference in dialectics is demonstrated by “Socrates’ contention that in order to assure himself of truth he must get the assent of a totally different kind of individual” (Barker, 2002).

¹⁴ In contrast to *Fragility*, p. 218, see Ficino’s reading of *Phaedrus* (254a-e) in *On Love* Speech 2:6. Read together they suggest a third view, an oscillation between universal and particular.

¹⁵ Nussbaum aligns emotion with the spirited element of the tripartite soul explicitly when she calls “the *thumos*--the ‘second’ or emotional part of the soul” (p. 230, also pp. 214-215). This reading is inaccurate in that it limits emotion to one part of the soul. However the dark horse/ appetitive part (254a3-6) and also the charioteer/intellect (254b4-c2) also experience emotions, those of the latter possess the greatest force and intensity of feeling bringing the whole soul under its control. The dark horse tends to experience emotions of passionate desire, anger (254c6) and anguish (254e5-6). The white horse feels shame, horror and anxiety (254c4) while the charioteer experiences resentment towards the dark horse (254e1-2) and indignation (254b1) and the strongest and most overpowering of all emotions, awe towards the form of beauty (254b6) the feeling by which he ultimately tames even the dark horse (254e9-10). Moreover, Plato writes that the sensation of warmth “suffuses the whole soul” (253e6), meaning both horses and charioteer (253c7-8), showing that feeling is not limited to one part of the soul.

The limitation of emotion to one area of the soul results from the reading of the soul as bipartite, a position suggested in the *Phaedo* and which Hackforth (pp. 107-8) argues to be likewise suggested in *Republic* IV. Barker (2002) notes that Plato also employs the bipartite conception of the soul as *thumos* and *philosophon* in *Republic* 2-3. It can be argued that not only does this tendency to view the soul as bipartite, relegating emotions to one part, surface and become dominant in Neo-Platonism, evident in the Gnostic and ascetic tradition’s endorsing of the renunciation of the body and the sensuous world, poignantly demonstrated in Plotinus’s *Enneads* (see “Problems of the Soul”, IV.3.15; “The nature and Source of Evil, I.8.14; also Gerard Watson, *Greek Philosophy*, Ch. 6 and Armstrong, “Plotinus” in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 223, 230), but that this tension with, yet dominance over, the conception of the tripartite soul may be argued to resurface in Augustine’s struggle through various models to formulate the trinitarian soul as the image of God in *de Trinitate* (XVI, 4-6) in which emotion seems to be limited to one area of the soul. Yet regardless of its validity in expressing a tension between the tripartite and bipartite in the Platonic conception of the soul, this Neo-Platonic view is not purely Platonic as, according to the *Republic* XI, “each part of the soul has its proper desires” and by implication emotions. This perhaps explains why, when discussing Plotinus, Armstrong (pp. 206-7) states that “the Gnostic contempt for the physical world was so profoundly shocking to a Platonist”.

into and contaminate rational understanding (*Fragility*, p. 216).

Rather than blocking the soul from the beautiful, this holistic and multi-levelled reaction of the soul to beauty allows “*eros* to set its sights very high” (*Fragility*, p. 217) as it permits the transformation of the sensibility of the lover,¹⁶ including the intellect through sensuous experience.¹⁷ However, by showing the appetitive faculty directly to alter the intellect, and the intellect as pursuing such alteration, she suggests the violation of Plato’s notion of *sophrosune*, harmony in the soul resulting from the intellect’s dominance over its appetitive and spirited parts, thus inviting chaos within the soul, brought about by the contamination of *sophrosune* by *mania*.

Although Nussbaum’s account of the recantation of the dichotomy of *sophrosune* and *mania* in favour of a philosophical *mania* of multidimensional levels of knowing¹⁸ moves away from the *Phaedrus* in terms of the understanding of the movement towards unity, the beloved and particularly with regard to the ascent to the Forms,¹⁹ Nussbaum is correct in identifying a shift in the text which however seems more subtle than she

¹⁶ This reaction to beauty... develop[s] and educate[s] the personality as a whole, making it both more discriminating and more receptive.” (*Fragility*, p. 215)

¹⁷ Nussbaum (p. 217) states that “in people with more complex aspirations, *eros* sets its sights very high, searching for a sensual experience that will lead to the mysterious transformation of the entire soul, including the intellect”. Sensuous experience not only transforms the soul but alters/metamorphoses the intellect. For her the philosophical thinker should seek sensuous experiences which transform the intellect.

¹⁸ When she states that “*eros* sets its sights very high”, though intentionally alluding to the Forms which are so integral a part of Platonism, rather than a dichotomous vision of *sophrosune* versus *mania* which she suggests is the opposition of the rational/intellect versus irrational/appetitive and emotional, Nussbaum’s reading of the *Phaedrus* prescribes that the two become integrated as one to produce a transformation through philosophical *mania*, a position which Nussbaum considers to be heretical for middle period Plato.

¹⁹ It can be asked whether Nussbaum’s account of self-transformation actually corresponds to the Platonic ascent as described in the *Phaedrus*; while this is admittedly distinct from the *Symposium*’s ascent, both ascents are by *eros* for an individual (*Symposium*, 210a6-8; *Phaedrus* 255c7-10), and the conversations instigated by the same individual, Phaedrus (*Symposium* 177a4-8; *Phaedrus* 227b6). Plato’s middle dialogues propose an ascent not so different from that of Socrates’ second speech (246d7). The latter indicates they will recover their wings (256b4); the purpose of the wings is to “carry (the heavy) aloft to the region where the gods dwell” (246d7), an ascent to the summit of the arch of heaven (247b1) where “reason alone, the soul’s pilot can behold” (246c8) “true being...without colour or shape,” (246c6-7), the Forms of justice, temperance and knowledge. (246d6; At 250b5 beauty is described as a form along with justice and temperance). Both in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, understanding is gained through the pursuit and contemplation of the Forms. However Nussbaum’s use of “sights very high” seem playful/clever and her text implies an ascent which does not extend beyond the empirical. Given this, what kind of a self-transformation does she hope to achieve? Clearly she is concerned with living the best life and respect for difference. These questions venture beyond the scope of the concerns of this thesis. What remains significant however is that she proposes an “ascent” consciously opposing that of Plato of the middle dialogues and further, in her veering in her conception of ascent, as with her conception of difference (as opposed to Plato’s movement towards unity), Nussbaum seems to have moved away from Plato’s text in her reading of the *Phaedrus*.

believes. This shift is overstated in Nussbaum's reading in that she unlike Warner does not recognize that *mania* "draws on one's non-intellectual elements in a disciplined...framework" ("Appropriating the *Phaedrus*", p. 12; cf. Cornford, "*Eros*", p. 128, with regard to the *Symposium*)²⁰ in a way which indicates the underlying presence of *sophrosune*. When seen in the light of *Timaeus* 71d-72b with regard to the distinction of *mantike* (*mantis*) and *prophetes*, the relation of *mania* and *sophrosune* is illuminated in that rather than "the 'rational' [controlling] the 'irrational' or 'crazy',...it interprets the latter's inspired visions; [so] each is essential to the other" (Barker, 2002). Hence this relation of *mania* and *sophrosune* puts into question Nussbaum's understanding of Platonic *eros*.²¹ Plato's understanding of *sophrosune* is more subtle and sophisticated than Nussbaum acknowledges, creating a site for the abandon of *mania* to occur in that being inseparable from *mania* it interprets and therefore rationalizes it.

Nonetheless, Nussbaum's claim that, through the recantation, Plato was seeking to show that the erotic life can be the good life through containing an element of *sophrosune*, which prevents *eros* from moving into sheer excess and decadence, is accurate. However this manipulation of the concepts of *sophrosune* and *mania* is less a product of a radical change than an evolution. These elements were seeds in Plato all along (as we shall see through examining Hackforth's analysis) only coming to be

²⁰ Warner in "Appropriating the *Phaedrus*" (p. 12-13), likewise sensitive to the role of the non-intellectual elements in the transformation, manages to stay closer to the text and Plato's conception of the ascent when he writes, "one gives oneself over to a vision of philosophy with a power that draws on one's non-intellectual elements in a disciplined yet imaginatively open framework, inviting one to interrogate the vision in an active progress which may draw one beyond it as one's sensibility is transformed", nourishing the growth of the wings which, through a contemplation of "joy, awe, and reverence" like the charioteer (254e9-10), result in an ascent. "Giving oneself over" suggests a self-abandonment involved with *mania* but this *mania* draws in a "disciplined" way (254e7; 256b3; 256a5-9) indicative of the underlying presence of *sophrosune* which likewise is echoed by "framework" indicative of the harmonious ordering of the intellect creating order in the soul, meaning that, though transformed, intellect/reason is controlling/supervising the other parts of the soul (Cornford, "The Doctrine of *Eros*", p. 121) drawing them closer to itself. For Warner, in drawing from its own elements the soul is personal, individual, yet it is drawn beyond itself by the *mania* of *eros* controlled by intellect towards the universal Idea and is thereby transformed while remaining itself, perhaps becoming its true self, which occurs through a dialectic with another individual (a transformation insisted on by Nussbaum).

²¹ This puts into question Nussbaum's understanding of *eros*, particularly with regard to *mania*. Nussbaum originally set up dichotomies between *mania* versus *sophrosune* and *eros* versus *sophrosune*, ordering the Platonic progression in a way that appears to be a product of her own agenda. (Compare the way she sets up a similar opposition between Aristotelianism and the passionate life, embodied in Medea, in "Serpents in the Soul".) Plato views *sophrosune* as self-control, justice in the soul which is governed by intellect and in which each part of the soul is permitted its expression without hindering the rest, and *mania*, though fully indeterminate if released, is inseparable from *sophrosune* both in the *Republic* and in the *Symposium*. Nussbaum understands *mania* as a fully irrational state brought on by divine possession.

articulated explicitly as *sophrosune* governing *mania*-inspired *eros* in the *Phaedrus*, where an awareness of love of the individual as such becomes more acute. Nussbaum's reading of Socrates' recantation of his first speech as embodying Plato's recantation of his past views is thus flawed; his thought is better understood as a gradual growth process.

B. THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Through the integration of *sophrosune* and *mania* into *eros* in Socrates' second speech, the individual as an object of love gains value. In Chapter III we saw that Vlastos, Kosman (pp. 54-5) and Singer (pp. 72, 87) criticized Plato's view of love of the individual viewing Plato's understanding of love to be utilitarian and selfish, and the human being expendable as love is transferable. According to Nussbaum, in the middle dialogues Socrates' *eros* for the individual is limited/controlled, *sophrosune*, while in contrast Alcibiades' notion of *eros* is unlimited *mania*. Determinate and limited *eros*, *sophrosune*, is good while unlimited indeterminate *eros* is evil. However, entirely determinate *eros*, if construed as involving self-control and hence self-concern, can not be considered true *eros* of the individual, as an essential quality of such *eros* is selflessness (Vlastos, p. 32).²² As such a love is based upon an amalgamation of qualities,

²² Plato's ranking of personal love suggests for Vlastos ("Individual", pp. 29-32) that he has not understood true love of the individual. "Since persons in their concreteness are thinking, feeling, wishing, hoping, fearing beings, to think of love for them as love for objectifications of excellence is to fail to make the thought of them as *subjects* central to what is felt for them in love" (p. 32). Furthermore to love well "kindness, tenderness, compassion, concern for freedom, respect for the integrity of the beloved are... essential ingredients of the highest type of interpersonal love" (p. 29), elements which for Vlastos Plato was scarcely aware of in his desire to ascend to the Forms and achieve a kind of perfection. In viewing people as expendable, he shows his inner imperfection with regard to virtue, suggesting an intrinsic imperfection in his conception of the ascent. "The fashioner of this utopia has evidently failed to see that what love for our fellows requires of us is, above all, imaginative sympathy and concern for what they themselves think, feel, and want. He has, therefore, missed that dimension of love in which tolerance, trust, forgiveness, and respect have validity. Apart from these imperatives the notion of loving persons as 'ends in themselves' would make no sense" (p. 32). For this reason Vlastos viewed Plato as a utilitarian (concerning the *Republic's* utilitarian project, see Karl Popper's *Open Society*; also Vlastos p. 15), using the individual to serve universal ends so that the individual derives value from use and is therefore expendable, not loved as an end in himself (p. 32) so that for Vlastos, Plato's view of love shows that he does not understand love.

Whether or not Plato's notion of love undervalues the individual, it is for Vlastos the only conception of love which is coherent and workable within Plato's system. For Plato, "to make flesh-and-blood men and women terminal objects of our affection would be folly or worse, idolatry, diversion to

and as these qualities are transitory, it is not true love. Thus a limited or conditional love of the individual is not love of the individual (Kosman, p. 56).²³ In this way Nussbaum suggests the limitation of the middle dialogues' notion of love of the individual is among other things selfishness, fear of finitude, a fear of loss of control or *mania*.

Though in the *Symposium* this type of love has some similarities with the love of Alcibiades, to fully attribute this critique of love to Plato's Socrates is incorrect. As we have seen, like the lover in Diotima's ascent who seeks to procreate true virtue, Socrates does love individuals in so far as he holds an educating role seeking the well-being of the souls of those he speaks with. Barker (2002) correctly points out that Diotima's description of the lover procreating true virtue and Socrates' "educative, soul tending aspect" point towards the resolution of this *aporia* in that *eros*, even if acquisitive shows an aspect of selflessness. For Barker (2002) "love for an individual is not directed at existing qualities that he/she only conditionally has, but involves the aspiration that such qualities may be developed in him/her", the perfection of the individual. Given that in this context of Greek virtue-based ethics "the quest for self-perfection is at the core

images of what is due only to the divine original". Vlastos implies that as only this theory of love fits into Plato's theory this indicates that the theory needs to be reworked; Nussbaum in her essay shows Plato's recantation and reworking of this theory of love through the *Phaedrus*, a paper which she had Vlastos read prior to its publication.

²³ According to Kosman, "conditional love of the individual is not love of the individual" as it is "bestowed in response to and on the condition of qualities which the individual happens to have, whatever the independent relation of these qualities to the lover". As these qualities are transitory, so then is the love showing it not to be true love. In order to have a true love of the individual therefore love must be "unconditional, given regardless of the worth or worthlessness of the object. As long as love is in response to or conditional upon the object's worth, or in general its being lovable, then it would seem to be those features in virtue of which the object is lovable which constitute the true and proper objects of love, not the individual who happens to have them" (Kosman, p. 56).

In order to respond linguistically to this need of unconditional love, Kosman suggests *agape* referring to Nygren's *Agape and Eros*. This is disputed by Vlastos who criticizes Nygren for not recognizing the subtle relation of *philia* and "a near synonym" *agape* and not recognizing that the Greeks were "as capable of genuine, non-egoistic affection as we are" (Vlastos, p. 6; for some contemporary arguments in favour of altruism see Nagel's *The Possibility of Altruism*). Vlastos (pp. 5-6) uses instead Aristotle's notion of *philia* to represent the standard of unconditional love against which he compares Plato's *eros*, which is also more appropriate considering this use of *philia* is chronologically and culturally closer to Plato than Christianity.

For Barker (2002) Vlastos and Kosman hold views which are problematic in that they assume love of the individual must necessarily be unconditional. If a woman ceases to love a man because some significant aspect of him has changed, this does not mean that she never loved him and likewise if the woman changes while the man remains the same, this does not prove that she never loved him. "None of this implies that 'unconditional' love is impossible, or that it is not admirable; but the logic by which some writers makes unconditionality an essential feature of absolutely any love for an individual seems [very problematic]".

of...the Greek ethical project” and functions as the “ethical ideal” (Barker, 2003), to help another in his or her quest for ethical perfection, while involving the perfection of the self, is a great act of love. In this sense to be virtuous necessarily involves the begetting of virtue in others. Nonetheless in this context it “becomes difficult, if not unintelligible, to conceive ‘selfless’ love as an ethical ideal” (Barker, 2003), hence Platonic *eros*’ radical distinction from *agape*.

Thus Socrates, while and in seeking self-perfection, does show a love of the individuals in that through *sophrosune* his *eros* remains pure and constructive, focused on the well-being and ultimate perfection of the other. This is opposed to Alcibiades exemplifying uncontrolled *eros*, a destructive form of *mania* which indicates that he has a poor understanding of true love of the individual. Thus while Nussbaum was correct in her opposition of Socrates exemplifying *sophrosune*-dominant *eros* and Alcibiades *mania* as uncontrolled *eros* in the *Symposium*, her account of Socrates’ understanding of love of the individual was deficient.

For Nussbaum Socrates’ second speech marks a shift in that for the first time in her view a proper conception of love of the individual and a love relationship is fleshed out which articulates the virtues of love articulated by Vlastos (“Individual”, pp. 29, 32). This indicates for her a change from *eros* for the individual conceived of in the middle dialogues as negative and evil, to good and essential for the well-being of individuals and the ascent to the forms. As we have seen above, she was incorrect in believing Plato of the middle dialogues had no conception of the love of individuals and that *eros* directed towards the individual was negative, though for Plato positively conceived *eros* must be governed by *sophrosune* as we saw in *Republic* 403b. However Nussbaum was correct in that she does note a shift in which Plato more fully integrates *sophrosune* and *mania* into a form of *eros* allowing *eros* to be mad yet simultaneously controlled. This, as we have seen, is in keeping with *Timaeus* 71d-72b in which an integral part of *mania* is its interpretation. Though in the middle dialogues *mania* had not been fully integrated or was less intense, its integration and intensification is evident in the psychological graphically passionate description of and language concerning the charioteer in *Phaedrus* 253c7-256e, and particularly the sexual imagery in *Phaedrus* 255b3-256a3 in which there are allusions to liquid and to Ganymede. These elements in this section of the *Phaedrus*

suggest a melting and therein on some level a surrender and abandon which indicates a new level concerning the integration of *mania* into philosophical *eros* in the text.

Though this seems valid, the means by which Nussbaum backs up her argument is problematic. She supports her argument by explaining these aspects of the *Phaedrus* with a specific episode in Plato's life conceiving of this as the background to the *Phaedrus* which though imaginative weakens her argument. Nussbaum argues that the source of these changes is found within Plato's personal life. "What brought it about that this most intolerant of human beings would decide, at some time around 365 B.C., that he had been too simple in his condemnation of madness?" (*Fragility*, p. 228) Linking what she conceives of as a reversal of Plato's views, which we have seen to be far less radical than she suggests, to Plato's personal experience, Nussbaum suggests the possible impact of one individual on Plato by exploring the linguistic ways in which Plato's reference to *Phaedrus* seems to allude to Dion of Syracuse.²⁴ She interprets the relation of Plato and

²⁴ Nussbaum here takes etymological liberties. She writes, "The name Zeus, as we see clearly in its oblique cases, has the root Di-: the genitive "of Zeus" is "*dios*". The soul of the younger man, furthermore, is described at 252E as "*dion*"—"brilliant" or "shining"—a word derived from the same root. Plato strikingly juxtaposes the two words in this passage, signalling to us that he wishes us to think of them as etymologically connected: *hoi men de oun Dios dion tina einai zetousi ten psuchen ton huph hauton eromenon*, 'Those who are followers of Zeus seek that the soul of their beloved should be brilliant (Zeus-like).' Interpreters have not hesitated to see in all this a reference to Dion of Syracuse--and, by extension, to see the love described here as an account of Plato's own passionate devotion to Dion. We can go even further, however: for we notice that the name "Phaidros" has the same meaning as the name 'Dion'. Both mean 'brilliant' or 'sparkling'. Given the prominence accorded to the actual name of Dion within this dialogue, it seems impossible that this fact about "Phaedrus" could have escaped Plato's attention; it seems virtually certain that Plato is telling us, in this way, that Phaedrus in some sense represents Dion." (*Fragility*, p. 229) Barker (2002) comments that "the connection between the names Phaedrus and Dion is forced; '*dios*' does not mean 'sparkling', but 'divine', 'noble', 'heavenly'...while *phaidros* connotes primarily things that are visually apparent, the glitter of smooth surfaces". (Examples of Plato's etymological playfulness are also found in the *Cratylus*, not lending support to her argument though showing Plato's tendency to evoke levels of meaning through playing with the meaning of words.)

"We know virtually nothing of Phaedrus outside the pages of Plato" (Hackforth, p. 12). Ryle in *Plato's Progress* writes a particularly provoking section called "the real Dion" in which he attempts to prove that Plato's Letters are contemporary forgeries (Ryle, p 69). "Chronology by itself proves that Letters III, VII and XIII were not written by Plato; and Letter VII carries Letter VIII with it. Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Diogenes Laertius and later historians and scholars have relied on these Letters for their accounts of Dion's virtues and of the young Dionysius' vices. If the Letters are forgeries, then the traditional story about Dion is without any authority" (Ryle, p. 68-9). Furthermore, he argues that Dionysius was not a tyrant (Ryle, p. 69; allowing Dion to draw his income according to Plutarch, *Dion* XV, p. 71; "political rather than unprincipled" p. 72; 346 B.C. restored to his post and later "voluntarily resigned"; also on good terms with Plato in *Laws* 710-711) while Dion through historical action appears more tyrannical (Ryle, 71; force almost entirely mercenaries; Syracusans voted to "displace their professed liberator" p. 73, "Plutarch has to admit that his idealist hero was suspected by many of aiming at the tyranny himself" pp. 73-4); the "intimate alliance between the two idealists, Plato and Dion, was fabricated by the author of the Letters" (p. 82). "Dion's party...did, however, achieve one long-term success. By means of a few forged letters it

Dion as represented in Socrates' second speech, in terms of the *erastes* and *eromenos*, the philosophical couple, the followers of Zeus (252e1-253b1),²⁵ an interpretation to which she believes Plato's epitaph for Dion²⁶ lends support.²⁷ She uses this epitaph to support her view that Plato is commenting upon and rethinking his position of the *Republic* in the *Phaedrus*, giving Nussbaum, in the *Fragility of Goodness*, the opportunity to rethink her conception of love of the individual in Plato.²⁸ She believes that through undertones of

attached to Dion for two thousand years the glory of having tried to realize in Syracuse the Ideal state of Plato" (p. 80). If accepted, Ryle's account would undermine significant aspects of Nussbaum's "tale".

²⁵ Nussbaum notes that the ages of Plato and Dion fit more accurately than those of Phaedrus and Socrates into the conventional/appropriate ages of *erastes* and *eromenos* at the probable time of the dialogue's composition, "this then looks like Plato's way of playfully telling us that the "boy" to whom he is speaking in this piece of writing is his beloved pupil, like him both a political and philosophical character... [thus] this dialogue has the character of a love letter, an expression of passion, wonder and gratitude". (*Fragility*, p. 229; similarities in the philosophical and political character of Plato and Dion are brought out in the *Seventh Letter* (if it is authentic) 325-327; Plato, 325c5-b3, Dion, 327a3-b2, application of Plato's teaching 327b6-d5, attempted actualization of Plato's thought, 328b1-c2) Although Nussbaum works out with fascination and detail the relative ages of Socrates and Phaedrus and Plato and Dion, it is virtually impossible to gauge with any accuracy their ages at the time of *Phaedrus*' composition. However, this exploration of the etymology of Dion and emphasis upon it may explain why Nussbaum attributes little importance to the ascent to the form of beauty, which we discussed earlier, focusing instead on its beautiful reflection, Dion. This concentration in some ways echoes the gesture of Alcibiades (219d2-e5) and the narrowing of his vision. The imbalance that this strong emphasis produces perhaps explains why at moments Vlastos' criticism of Plato's notion of love of the individual is challenged.

²⁶ "Tears were the portion that the Fates spun out / at birth for Hecuba and the Trojan women. / But you, Dion, had built a monument / of noble actions, when the gods spilled / your fair-flowing hopes upon the ground. / You lie there now, in the spacious earth / of your fatherland, praised by citizens. Dion, / you who drove my heart mad with love." (Plato 353 B.C.; quoted *Fragility*, p. 200)

²⁷ "Upon the sudden death of Dion at the hands of his enemies (around ten years after the composition of *Phaedrus*), Plato wrote the elegiac verses. . . which contrast the unrelieved misery of the women of Troy with Dion's surprising and premature death in the midst of happiness, make mention of *eros*, of *mania*, and of the *thumos*--the "second" or emotional part of the soul. (The last line reads, literally, "O Dion, you who drove my *thumos* mad (*ekmenas*) with *eros*".) "This intense passion expressed in these verses has been noticed; what has not been noticed is that this passion, and its poetic expression in the form of conventional lamentation, directly contravenes the prohibition of the *Republic* against the lamentation of the deaths of beloved individuals. Indeed, they contravene the whole moral scheme of the *Republic* and the *Symposium*: for if one saw persons, and their value, in the way recommended by these two dialogues, one would have, in the death of the individual, no basis for grief. One 'drop' of the good and beautiful more or less--it should not affect us if we have correct beliefs. Furthermore the good person's stable activity should not be risked by the formation of intense particular attachments that would bring the shock of this deep grief. Therefore the *Republic* banishes both grief and poetic lamentation, leaving them, at most, to the 'not-very-good-women.'" (*Fragility*, p. 230) Plato according to Nussbaum's reading, places himself in the position not of "a self-sufficient philosopher, but a not-very-good woman" (*Fragility*, p. 230). Plato is unashamed of his grief, shown in the publication of his poem (353 B.C.) a public acknowledgement of *mania* produced from being overcome with passion, opposing his advancing of *sophrosune* in the middle dialogues.

²⁸ This epitaph contains a confession of *eros*, *mania* and deep grief going contrary to the small value of the individual as described by Vlastos (p. 26; when he refers directly to Dion) derived from both the *Republic* and the *Symposium* and the restrictions put on love in these two dialogues, individuals being loved for their use-value as congeries of qualities.

Nussbaum is clearly rethinking Vlastos' criticism (p. 28) of Plato's view of love of the individual as a "complex of qualities". In showing Plato mourning Dion with *eros* directed at Dion as a unique

Plato's relation with Dion the *Phaedrus* expresses "why this *mania* is now something that can be praised and acknowledged and how the experience of *mania* has left the philosopher with an altered view of self-sufficiency". Plato had always been aware of the power of *eros* and its resulting *mania* demonstrated by what she conceived of as his wariness of *eros* of the individual in the middle dialogues; "What he had not seen was its power for goodness" (p. 231) as he had not truly experienced reciprocated love in his own life,²⁹ prior to his relation with Dion. After this she believes *eros* is considered a constitutive element in "the truly blessed life" (*Fragility*, p. 232). We have shown that this radical shift did not occur with regard to the value of the individual but was always present in the Platonic dialogues. What did occur in Socrates' second speech however was an intensification of the *mania* element of the philosophical *eros* articulated in *Symposium* 210-211 and *Republic* 403b. However in this context, if Dion had influenced Plato, Plato's love for Dion in showing him the "power of goodness' of love for an individual...would also show him how love for an individual can illuminate one's philosophical understanding of universals (the 'nature' of love, the shape of the route [for example])" (Barker, 2002). Implicit in this is the sense that love for an individual constitutes both the first and the second step in Diotima's ascent to the beautiful which leads us back to the *Symposium* weakening Nussbaum's argument. Furthermore as we have already seen (see note 24 above), Nussbaum's argument rests on the inaccurate etymology that both *Phaedrus* and *Dion* mean "sparkling". As "'dios' does not mean 'sparkling', but 'divine', 'noble', 'heavenly'....while *phaidros* connotes primarily things that are visually apparent, the glitter of smooth surfaces" (Barker, 2002), their etymologies emphasize their difference. This difference is further accentuated in that the

individual, resembling to this extent Alcibiades' love for Socrates as interpreted by Nussbaum, Nussbaum shows Plato to love Dion not for the good Dion gave Plato only, but contrary to Vlastos (p. 32) as an end in himself, indicating to her a shift from or recanting of the view of love of individuals as a means to the end of the good to the love of individuals as having intrinsic value in themselves, as ends in themselves and therefore contributing to the good life.

²⁹ Nussbaum tries to draw a loose correlation between the relationships of *Phaedrus* and Socrates with Dion and Plato. Nussbaum reads Plato's relationship to Socrates as unrequited love. If we substitute Plato for *Phaedrus*, "we might see the *Phaedrus* as a wish, *per impossible*, for the deep mutual love of teacher and pupil, a wish that Socrates had been a little more mad, receiving and teaching insight of *eros*. The double reference also tells us that Plato now claims to be the Socrates that Socrates should have been but refused to be; that he found what eluded his teacher, a fusion of clarity and passion." (*Fragility*, p. 232)

Dion of the Seventh Letter 327a³⁰, unlike Phaedrus who maintains a certain superficiality faced with Socrates³¹, was persuaded by Plato to pursue philosophy. Therefore though fascinating and imaginative, Nussbaum's reading in terms of scholarship is inaccurate.

C. RECANTING NUSSBAUM

We might attempt to rescue Nussbaum's reading of the recantation by pointing out that she correctly writes "the ethical value of passion is itself an unstable achievement...Plato indicates... 'This story isn't true', so that it can equally, at any point, be turned against Socrates' second speech, or against the whole of the action of the dialogue" (*Fragility*, p. 232). Nussbaum, though ultimately using the recantation and its aporetic structure to avoid drawing a conclusion (spinning the possible readings through the word "perhaps"), here responds on a different and far more vulnerable level by pointing through the recantation to the fragility of goodness. This position emphasizes the fragility of human relationships, suggesting that she may be more influenced by the epitaph than the dialogue. The specific fragility which Nussbaum's reading brings to Plato is the fragility of human life, finitude, which she brings out through her allusion to the historical Dion who is not directly mentioned and may not even be referred to in the dialogue. Regardless of its imaginative power, this reading of the recantation of the *Phaedrus* appears to over-emphasize finitude.³² When looked at in relation to the actual

³⁰ "Dion, who was very quick of apprehension and especially so in regard to my instruction on this occasion, responded to it more keenly and more enthusiastically than any other young man I ever met, and resolved to live the remainder of his life differently from most of the Greeks in Italy and Sicily, holding virtue dearer than pleasure or than luxury." (Seventh Letter, 327a7-b1)

³¹ Phaedrus though initiating the discussion in the *Phaedrus* (227b6; as in *Symposium* 177a5-8) responds to Socrates superficially, particularly after Socrates' second speech according to Rutherford (p. 258), Cobb (p. 143) and Warner (p. 12), comportment which causes Ferrari (*Cicadas*, pp. 4-9) explicitly to describe him as an *impresario*. Strangely, Nussbaum does not note the lack of receptivity on the part of Phaedrus, as she seems to envision or depict him as the ideal student in which philosophical thought and life are inseparable and interpenetrating in the erotic dialectical *mania* (p. 212; involving receptivity and openness). Though profound and illuminating her reading can not explain the superficiality of Phaedrus' response which in itself might function as a Platonic technique to elicit the participation of the reader as a means of conversion.

³² In the Platonic and Neo-Platonic tradition, personal finitude was emphasized in order to drive the individual to look beyond the self in order to recognize the truer more real being lying beyond the empirical world, whether Plato's forms, Plotinus' the One, or the Judeo-Christian God. Truth being eternal is beyond the natural/phenomenal world which is in flux (*Symposium*, 207d4-208a2) and is that in which all things participate. Through cleaving to the physical reality (*Republic* 518c6-8, 515e5-6) the individual cannot

text, though aware of finitude, Plato ultimately in his “quest for certainty”³³ is constantly underlining rather than undermining the immortality of the soul, a tendency constantly resisted by Nussbaum. This is evident in his movement towards unity and universality, in contrast to Nussbaum who embraces difference, particularization and multiplicity, symptomatic of her concern for finitude and indeterminacy, and who lacks interest in the ascent to the Forms whether metaphysical or Ideas, valuing instead the individual and non-transcendental. This leaning is evident in her interpretation of Alcibiades (supported by her understanding of *Medea*)³⁴ which is similar to her reading of the fragility and mortality of Dion, as an object of love, which she projects onto the *Phaedrus*, giving new meaning to “false, false the tale”.³⁵ Nussbaum’s is in a sense a tragic perspective as it suggests loving the individual involves the acknowledging and accepting of finitude, which though in a sense true, from a Platonic perspective can be interpreted as the tale of

initiate an ascent (involving the interaction of both mind and *eros*) to this mental realm without releasing his grasp on the phenomenal. The recognition of finitude, a temporal limit on the life span of all constitutive elements in the life of the individual causes/provokes a recognition which can initiate this change in perspective (*Republic* 518c6-8), whether the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, or the description of the physical and mental state of flux of the individual in *Symposium* 207d4-208a2, or following the Neo-Platonic line of influence (see Watson *Greek Philosophy*, pp. 24-25). One of the most effective illustrations of this transition is made in the fourth century by Augustine, a Christian Neo-Platonist, in his description of the death of a friend after which he wrote “my heart was black with grief. ...I became an enigma to myself” (*Confessions* 4:4). In loving his friend he was joined to and shared his being with his friend indicating a lack of self-sufficiency. Through this death, Augustine’s heart which belonged to his friend died with him and became black, filled with death, absence, a negative lack or void. For this reason, paradoxically housing both life and death, he ceased to know himself, and became unknown to himself, an enigma. Through this time of contact with death, he became aware of finitude and according to Watson (*Greek Philosophy*, p. 96) though “he gradually recovered from his grief could never forget the wound”, ultimately directing him beyond the physical because “wherever the soul of man turns, unless towards God, it cleaves to sorrow. All things rise and set: in rising they begin to be, and they grow towards perfection, and once come to perfection they grow old, and they die: not all grow old but all die. Therefore when they rise and tend towards being, the more haste they make towards fullness of beings the more haste they make towards ceasing to be” (*Confessions* 4:10). All creation is transitory, coming into being and dying away. To attach oneself to these dying leaves is to cling to death, to embrace the void, as without fail the object will fall away and the soul will be left with its tears as its only consolation (*Enneads* 3,5,1). Thus exemplified through Augustine, the purpose of the emphasis on finitude within the Platonic/Neo-Platonic tradition is to direct or move the individual beyond the finite, through beauty to the infinite (see the *Symposium* ascent 209e-211b; *Enneads* 2,9,16 and 6,9,9; *Confessions* X: 9 and 34). This use of finitude is substantially different from Nussbaum’s who seems to see it as an end in itself.

³³ Plato’s ascent and search for absolute being is a “quest for certainty” reacting to the flux of nature. (Singer, pp. 57-8)

³⁴ *Symposium* 222c; *Fragility*, pp. 199, 230; “Serpents of the Soul” pp. 442-57.

³⁵ Although the *Phaedrus* is a recantation, indeed a recantation of a recantation as we shall see in the next chapter, it is less clear that “the *Phaedrus* as a whole has the form of this Palinode” (*Fragility*, p. 212) and that Plato is simply recanting his past views. Given his use of *aporiai*, Plato is far more complex. While Nussbaum seems to have clear ideas of what she wants to do with him, I fear that she has missed his full depth and complexity and therefore his beauty because she has not stayed close enough to the actual text.

Nussbaum.

VII.

THE PATH OF IRONY

Contrasting with Nussbaum's interpretation of the recantation as demarcating a radical change concerning Plato's philosophical position on *eros*, Hackforth envisages the *Phaedrus* as a gradual uncovering of the truth, attributing to the recantation far more subtle implications.

The main site in which this distinction becomes apparent is Hackforth's handling of Socrates' first speech. Unlike Nussbaum who tends to group Lysias' speech and Socrates' first speech together, Hackforth shows their subtle distinctions which prepare the way for and lead into Socrates' second speech, seeing it not as a full recantation and reversal of past views, but as a necessary step in the unveiling of the truth which for Hackforth is represented in Socrates' second speech. In order to appreciate this unveiling, we shall begin with Lysias' speech and follow the full progression.

A. LYSIAS' SPEECH¹

In Lysias' speech, deceitfully the non-lover, selfishly motivated by a desire for pleasure, tries to convince the youth that it is more in his interest and "less dangerous" to give himself to a non-lover than a lover.² Such a position presupposes a conception of

¹ Commentators dispute concerning the authorship of "Lysias' speech". Hackforth (p. 17) thinks it is "Plato's own invention". Guthrie ("Plato the Man and his Dialogues", p. 433) endorses Dover's argument (*Lysias*, pp. 69-71) ascribing it to Plato. A. E. Taylor (pp. 301-2), unlike Hackforth, thinks it genuine as given that "the dialogue ends in a severe and formal censure of Lysias...it would be self-stultifying to publish a severe criticism of a well-known author based on an imitation of him which the critic had composed for his own purposes and could not expect readers to take as authentic". Friedlander (p. 221) thinks it Lysias' authorship, then cites Grillparzer "the occasion was chosen only to go far beyond it". Many commentators remain undecided. "The style of the passage is Lysias', not Plato's, but Plato was a skilful parodist... and perfectly able to imitate Lysias at a superficial level; the question of authorship must therefore remain open" (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 44), a position also held by Shorey (*What Plato Said*, p. 131), Guthrie (p. 433) and de Vries (*Phaedrus*, p. 12-4).

² "Lysias' doctrine if you take it seriously is that the deliberately selfish sensualist is less dangerous to the equally self-interested object of his pursuit than the lover inspired by passion, who is liable to be carried away and behave imprudently." (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 70)

earthly *eros*³ as involving “unrestrained sexual desire” (Hackforth p. 31), tyrannous,⁴ destructive and therefore a sickness (231d)⁵, exemplifying the uncontrolled appetitive *eros* embodied in the dark horse of Socrates’ second speech (253e1-5; 254b1-3).

The non-lover wants his sexual gratification without the erotic attachment involved in love,⁶ articulated in his expression “grant a favour”.⁷ As this proposal eliminates the traditional courtship, it comes close to prostitution, the buying of sex,⁸ a thesis “offensive even to Athenians who approved of pederasty” (Guthrie, *Plato the Man and his Dialogues*, p. 398).⁹ Given that this is basically a proposal for the youth to

³ For both Hackforth and Cobb, both Lysias’ and Socrates’ first speech describe love conceived as the common Aphrodite (Cobb, p. 144), *Pandemos* (180e1), a reference with Santas (p. 59) to Pausanias’ speech in the *Symposium*.

⁴ See Cornford’s discussion of “Plato’s despotic man whose whole nature is dominated by the lowest part of the soul.” (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 71; also see *Republic* (588c5-7, d3-6) concerning the tyrant as related to uncontrolled *eros*.)

⁵ “The lover’s passion is a kind of madness or sickness, transient and unreliable, and... one would be better off having as a lover someone free of such a malady. This kind of *eros* reminds us of the ‘bad’ *eros* of Pausanias in the *Symposium*” (Santas, p. 59).

⁶ “The essence of his proposal is that he has discovered a way of attaining the desirable effects of the conventional erotic relationship without the undesirable effects that stem from the lover’s being in love” (Ferrari, *Cicadas* p. 91).

⁷ “This is shown in passage (230e-234c) [where] no explicit anatomical or physiological word, but rather such expressions as *kharizesthai*, ‘grant a favour (to...)’, [233de, 234b][are used]... In this context, where the man makes it plain that he is not in love with the boy, there is no room for doubt about the nature of the ‘favour’ which he wants. No linguistic distinction is drawn here between the desire of the non-*erastes* for bodily satisfaction divorced from *eros* and the obsessive, more complex desires of the *erastes*. It is assumed that the *erastes* is initially aroused by the sight of the boy’s beauty, even if he knows nothing of the boy’s character (232e). The *erastes* ‘follows’ (*akolouthein*, 232a) the boy conspicuously and ‘begs’ from him (implied in 233e, by analogy of the beggar at the door; cf. [*Symposium* 203b6, 203d1-4 and] *Xen. Mem.* I. 2.29) but will one day ‘cease from his desire’ (234a)”. (See Pausanias in *Symposium* 182a; also in terms of gratification 217a, 218d.) (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 44)

⁸ “One of the functions served by conventional erotic behavior was to mark off sexual relationships between erotic peers from those commercially procured from social inferiors—male and female courtesans and prostitutes. The elaborate emotional antics and rituals of courtship expected from the lover, extending even to stylized limitations of the sexual act itself, were in effect a badge of rank for both partners. Accordingly... the non-lover by poo-hooing the traditional agonies... comes close to using the boy as his whore. He is buying sex from him” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 92).

Lysias represents “bad rhetoric, as well as bad ethics” (A. E. Taylor, p. 302). Lysias’ “ethical ticket, to the extent that he can be pinned down to one, is hedonistic” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 96). He “appeal[s] to considerations of ‘utility’ in the most sordid sense of the word” (Taylor, p. 302; also see Hackforth, p. 111). Hackforth (p. 31) objects to Taylor (p. 302), stating that 233b “does betray some faint consciousness of the desirability of appealing to moral sentiment, however unreal the appeal may be”. However Ferrari objects to Hackforth stating “The non-lover reasons only about the means to ends, not about the ends themselves. Indeed, he does not in the least question whether the respective goals of lover and beloved in the traditional relationship are proper goals for them to have” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 91).

⁹ Therefore, “the thesis of Lysias... would be an offensive paradox, even to the section of Athenian society which practiced ‘unnatural’ aberrations. The fashionable theory was that the relations in question are enobled when they are inspired by genuine romantic attachment, but not otherwise... To suffer the advances of an *erastes* from calculations of advantage was regarded as the basest thing a Greek lad could

prostitute himself, in succumbing to this proposal, the youth is complicit in *hubris* against himself and thereby sinks to the basest level in society losing his standing in the community as a citizen, thereby in a sense excluding himself from society.¹⁰

Regardless of its negative ethical implications, Lysias might expect his speech to be accepted in terms of both form and content. In form it is confusing and repetitive, and therefore does not encourage rational thought¹¹ which would ultimately lead to ethical contemplation of the *telos* of this proposal. With regard to the argument, given the conventional homo-erotic relationship in which the elder experiences pleasure and sexual arousal while the younger derives “not sexual pleasure but social advancement and the friendship of an adult mentor”, the non-lover expects to have some success as this proposal is parasitic on the traditional roles and on the reason for the *erastes* entering into this type of relationship.¹² In this way the non-lover blurs the distinction between a traditional *eromenos* and a prostitute in order to win his suit.

do” (A. E. Taylor, p. 302). “None of the earlier speeches of the *Symposium* sank to this level” (Guthrie, “Plato the Man and his Dialogues”, p. 398).

¹⁰ *Hubris* is “any kind of behavior in which one treats other people just as one pleases, with an arrogant confidence that one will escape paying any penalty for violating their rights and disobeying any law or moral rule accepted by the society, whether or not such a law or rule is regarded as resting ultimately on divine sanctions” (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 34), and “anyone who attached the highest importance to the satisfaction of his own bodily desires could reasonably be called *hubristes*” (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 37), indicating the involvement and baseness of both participants, though particularly the *eromenos*. “It is not only by assimilating himself to a woman in the sexual act that the submissive male rejects his role as a male citizen, but also by deliberately choosing to be victim of what would be, if the victim were unwilling, *hubris*. The point of the fierce sanctions imposed by the Attic law on *hubris* was that the perpetrator ‘dishonoured’ (*atimazein*) his victim, depriving him of his standing as a citizen under the law, and standing could be recovered only by indictment which in effect called upon the community to reverse the situation and put down the perpetrator. To choose to be treated as an object at the disposal of another citizen was to resign one’s own standing as a citizen” (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 104). Therefore, he is excluded from citizenship because his true nature is revealed by and simultaneously henceforth determined by the prostitution (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 109). Thus through succumbing to the proposal of Lysias’ speech, the youth not only reduces himself to the basest level of Athenian society but excludes himself from his society.

¹¹ Lysias’ speech is a “tedious piece of rhetoric. . . flat monotonous, repetitive. . . the mechanical piling up of disconnected points. . . [having] a banality of sentiment”, “stitched together by repeated connectives, rather than logical order—or organic form (264C)” (Cobb, p. 144; also p. 146). In terms of form, “Lysias might have judged his own speech as more effective than that of Socrates for its specific purpose—the purpose of persuasion—precisely because it was less strictly organized and less logically grounded” (Friedlander, p. 224).

¹² “It is rather the voice of reason than the urging of passion that counsels his entry even upon a conventional relationship in the first place” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 90), (showing that “the non-lover’s proposition leaves the traditional goals of the erotic partnership in place, and is indeed wholly parasitic upon them”, p. 94). For this reason the speech of Lysias shows “love madness from the outside, from the viewpoint of the boy, who is not expected to share in its intensity and who can therefore be made to find it alien and off-putting” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” p. 263).

Furthermore the non-lover, regardless of apparent deviations, remains inscribed within tradition representing not the non-lover but the ex-lover¹³ who loves no longer. The non-lover's resemblance to the ex-lover explains the speech's banality in that he is "posing without real belief in this thesis and therefore [is] unable to give it life or do more than string together conventional sentiments" (Hackforth, p. 31), without any feeling behind them. He echoes the ex-lover whose feeling has been exhausted leaving him indifferent and selfish.¹⁴

As Socrates assimilates Lysias to his text, exemplified when he states "Much as I love you, I am not going to let you practice on me when Lysias himself is present" (228e),¹⁵ so Lysias can be interpreted as identified with his non-lover. It can be argued that Lysias' subject was not to be taken seriously, it being a *paignion*¹⁶, however, in the spirit of the *Republic*, Taylor (p. 302) correctly notes that though the non-lover's argument is not an "argument to be taken seriously" but a means to exhibit "cleverness", it suggests a "deep-seated moral depravity" in Lysias, particularly as Taylor believed that Lysias himself wrote the speech.¹⁷

¹³ "The non-lover (as his label would suggest) has nothing but negation to add to the traditional mix. He intends not to reform love, but to opt out of it... Indeed, so little does he attempt to alter tradition that his description of the likely behaviour of the lover who has fallen out of love can be seen to encapsulate his own position. The ex-lover, he claims, will scrutinize the dissolved relationship with a now coolly commercial eye, putting in the opposite pan of the scales for the first time all those favours and sufferings which he considered it a privilege to confer and undergo." (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 94)

¹⁴ See Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 71; Hackforth, p. 31.

¹⁵ "This identification of Lysias with his book paves the way for the critique of written works at the end of the dialogue, for as Lysias is in fact not present, he cannot defend himself or reply to Socrates' questions and criticisms.... Phaedrus' unsureness of his ability to recall the speech word for word anticipates the objection that books make the memory lazy and the mind uncritical of what it has learned (275ab), an objection well illustrated by the carefree enthusiasm of Phaedrus, which is so easily deflated when he is made to look more attentively at Lysias' composition (263d-4e)". (Rutherford, 243)

¹⁶ "Its argument is paradoxical... This is a typical sophistic *paignion* ('plaything')... it exploits a wide range of rational arguments in order to convince the listener of a proposition which at first seems contrary to all common sense". (Rutherford, p. 243) "It is probably unfair to Lysias (or to the way he is being portrayed by Plato) to take the content of this speech too seriously. It seems more reasonable to take it as the sort of display piece represented by Gorgias' famous defence of Helen's virtue." (Cobb, p. 144; a comment particularly interesting given the recantation of Stesichorus.)

¹⁷ "There are theses which cannot be defended and arguments which cannot be employed, even in jest, without revealing deep-seated moral depravity or insensibility; the kind of cleverness which sustains such theses by the use of such arguments is a real moral danger to the community and requires to be countered, as it is by Socrates, with better morality and superior wit". (A. E. Taylor, p. 302) Taylor, conceiving the authorship of Lysias' speech should be attributed to Lysias and not Plato, and though not thinking the thesis should be taken as Lysias' own, thinks it reveals an inner impiety and "moral depravity" within its author to which Socrates must necessarily respond. Barker (2002) views this sort of position as expressing "priggish self-righteousness in its high moral tone" which even if perhaps correct demonstrates "what Nussbaum was

B. SOCRATES' FIRST SPEECH

Following Phaedrus' enthusiastic rendition of Lysias' speech,¹⁸ Phaedrus challenges Socrates to make a better speech on the same topic which "admitted [the] 'madness' of the lover's passion better than Lysias has done" (A. E. Taylor, p. 303). Responding to the challenge, Socrates in his first speech takes on Lysias' thesis, improving upon it through defining his terms and systematizing its form into a coherent structure and argument,¹⁹ thereby proving that he is a greater "orator and rhetorician" than Lysias (see Friedlander, p. 221; also see Rutherford, pp. 250-1 with regard to Isocrates). "In this first speech at least, Plato intends the reader to take Socrates' effort as an example of good rhetoric with a bad content" (Cobb, p. 145-6), in that without qualification he identifies "pleasure-driven passion with *eros*" (Barker, 2002).²⁰

In terms of content in his first speech, Socrates emphasizes the harm of the gratification of a lover possessed by uncontrolled *eros*. *Eros*, a desire for pleasure aroused by beauty, he reasons is a form of *hubris* as opposed to *doxa* leading to *sophrosune*, and is therefore indicative of appetitive desire's subversion of judgement and

reacting against in her various celebrations of physical sexuality—the 'rhetoric' of philosophy that was characteristic of their era and social class can become obstructive in different times."

¹⁸ "Phaedrus and Lysias are initially grouped together, criticized by Socrates as they attach too much value to written works" (Rowe, p. 137). Phaedrus as Lysias' student begins from his position which justifies this grouping. Sceptically, Rowe and Cobb question "to what extent Phaedrus overcomes his initial superficiality" (Cobb, p. 142). This leaves the question open as to whether Phaedrus is really "sparkling" and "brilliant" (*Fragility*, pp. 211-12) as Nussbaum suggests or whether Plato is being ironic.

¹⁹ Socrates begins with a "mutually agreed upon definition" (237C) which is sustained through the speech. He writes an orderly speech, "[possessing] praiseworthy rhetorical characteristics" elaborated on at the end of the dialogue particularly with regard to "organic structure" (Cobb, p. 146). Thus Socrates "gives Phaedrus a lesson on how to investigate such a topic, namely by classifying and defining *eros* first and then going into its effects" (Santas, p. 59).

²⁰ Friedlander (p. 223) claims that these are "not Socrates' own views nor his own definition". In contrast Nussbaum, as we have discussed, sees this as representing Plato's conception of morality in the middle dialogues (i.e. the *Symposium* and the *Republic*) involving a *sophrosune/mania* dichotomy, *sophrosune* being moral while *mania* is immoral. For her in his second speech the crossing over of the irrational into the rational, the complexification of this dichotomy, shows the beginning of a new form of morality resulting in Plato forming a new conception of love through a new valuation of the love of the individual. For Barker (2002) while "the radical distrust of the pursuit of bodily pleasure does indeed match Plato's earlier views, as Nussbaum says", it differs from the *Symposium* and the *Republic* with regard to "its unqualified identification of this pleasure-driven passion with *eros*". Given that Socrates covers his head and later recants it, the view expressed in his first speech should not be attributed to Socrates.

reason.²¹ To the question of the harm or benefit involved with the gratification of the *erastes*' desire, Robin²² believes Plato lists all the "harmful effects of this kind of relation on the body, mind, and estate of the beloved" (which according to Friedlander (p. 223) are "the three Platonic realms of being") then goes on to elaborate on the feelings of the beloved both before and after the affair (Hackforth, p. 47), allowing no benefits.²³ Furthermore, in order to emphasize these evils and render the relationship more unappealing, he enumerates the various areas of potential good of which the *eromenos* will be deprived due to the *erastes*' selfishness and pleasure.²⁴ However in making this opposition between the pleasurable and the good, Socrates "makes no attempt to integrate pleasure with the good" (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 97) which is clearly an oversimplification. Socrates' first speech systematically analyzes Lysias' conception of *eros* in order to establish/pin-point his error after which he will be able to combat and correct it.²⁵

Given this view of *eros* as a form of *hubris*, the notion of *eros* in Socrates' first speech can be identified with that of Lysias' speech. Hackforth affirms this but goes further by stating that Socrates "only uphold[s] the Lysian thesis in so far as it condemned unrestricted sexual passion; so like the great second speech it condemns the

²¹ "Love' is, of course, a desire or craving for something. Now there are two principal types of desire—the 'inborn' craving for the pleasant [which Ferrari (*Cicadas*, p. 96) calls "natural desire" translated from *epithymia*], and the desire for the 'best', which is not inborn, but has to be acquired, and is based on judgment (δόξα [*doxa*])—and there is often a clash between the two. The victory of judgment (δόξα) in this conflict over appetitive craving is what we call *sophrosune*; the victory of appetite over our judgment of good we call 'lust' or 'passion' (ὕβρις, [*hubris*]). 'Love' (ἔρως, [*eros*] sexual passion) is one special variety of ὕβρις or 'lust'. It is the prevalence of violent desire for the pleasant uninformed by rational judgment of good, when aroused by physical beauty (238c). The question before us, then, is whether it is for the benefit or for the hurt of the party who has aroused such passion to gratify it." (A. E. Taylor, pp. 303-4; also see Guthrie, "Plato the Man and his Dialogues", p. 400; Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 72)

²² Plato, *Phèdre*, trans. L. Robin.

²³ "Because he has directly opposed pursuit of pleasure to the pursuit of good, he is unwilling to see the lover as bringing any good to the relationship; and for him the expectation of fickleness comes simply as the last straw in a long catalogue of evils (240e8-9)". (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 97)

²⁴ "Throughout the speech he contrasts the selfish pleasure sought by the lover with a list of goods which the boy has the sense to pursue, but of which the lover's selfishness will deprive him. These goods are not presented as themselves pleasures (albeit more lasting pleasures) that the boy seeks in turn; rather, they are tagged with such epithets as 'good' (*agathos*), 'upright' (*orthos*), 'divine' (*theios*), 'most dear' (*philtatos*), 'valuable' (*timios*), and invariably contrasted with what the lover finds 'sweet' or 'pleasurable' (*hedys*) (see 238b7-c1; 239b4-8; 239c4-5; 239e3-240a2; 241c4-6)". (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 96)

²⁵ Socrates' first speech is "at the same time an effort to clarify the human or all too human content of the sophistic product that is all the more dangerous when it is left vague. Only after this danger is plainly shown can Socrates fight against it". (Friedlander, p. 225)

false (266A) as left-handed (Hackforth, p. 37),²⁶ which implies that the negative implications attached to uncontrolled physical *eros* are consistent throughout the entire dialogue.

Having taken upon himself the content of Lysias' speech, the negative conception of *eros* as uncontrolled desire, Socrates distances himself from this position to protect himself from the misconception that he is in agreement with Lysias' thesis and content. He does this through blaming Phaedrus²⁷ and the inspiration or madness induced by the Muses.²⁸ Socrates further distances himself from this conception of *eros* by covering his head, marking a moment of misinterpretation and therefore deception, accompanied by the recognition that Phaedrus has misunderstood this action, and the ongoing allowance for Phaedrus' misunderstanding.²⁹ Most significantly, however, Socrates distances himself from this conception of *eros* through the characterization of his "non-lover", who is in fact a passionate lover pretending to be an indifferent non-lover. He does this through his disguise/deception but also through the excuse that he is

²⁶ On this account the three speeches represent negative or positive *erastes* and *eros*, Lysias' and Socrates' first speech representing the negative and Socrates' second speech exemplifying the positive. "Thus it is not only in his first speech that Socrates faults the sort of lover who allows his sexual hunger to dictate his behavior; so that in retrospect he reconciles the two speeches as containing, respectively, appropriate condemnation of an inferior type of love-madness and appropriate praise for a superior, 'divine' type (265e-266a)" (Ferrari, "Platonic Love", p. 263), which resembles Pausanias' earthly and heavenly Aphrodite, a categorization by which to discriminate between lovers. As "Diotima discriminated among us according to the inferior and superior brands of eternal good for which each of our souls yearns; Socrates in the *Phaedrus* divides the soul itself into three parts, and assesses the superiority and inferiority of the individual lover according to the outcome of the power struggle among the yearnings represented by each part" (Ferrari, "Platonic Love," pp. 263-4).

²⁷ Socrates "makes clear by word and deed that he does not agree with the thesis he is defending, repeatedly blaming Phaedrus for forcing him to make the speech (236e, 238d, 242d)" (Hackforth, p. 37). "That Socrates delivers his version of the non-lover's speech only under duress will prove important. It will help us to locate the voice of Socrates' non-lover in the moral development expressed through the three love-speeches taken as a series." (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 95)

²⁸ "He also points out that giving a polished speech of this sort is not characteristic of his engagement with *logos*, blaming his 'unusual fluency' (238c) on his being possessed by the Nymphs of the place (238d, 241e)." (Hackforth, p. 37)

²⁹ "To Phaedrus Socrates' words here doubtless express apprehension that he will disgrace himself by an inferior performance [to Lysias], but the shame that Socrates really feels is, as transpires later (243B), due to having been forced to adopt an unworthy conception of *Eros*" (Hackforth, p. 35). Socrates, knowing how Phaedrus is interpreting his actions, allows Phaedrus to continue to misinterpret him and therefore manipulates and misleads Phaedrus into thinking that Socrates views himself as inferior to Lysias. Though ironic in that Socrates as philosopher/lover of wisdom knows that he knows nothing, while Lysias as a sophist claiming to be wise does not realize that he knows nothing, Socrates does this to create a build up to Socrates' second speech by creating an object against which he can recant. Thus Socrates deceives Phaedrus making his repugnance appear to be modesty.

in fact an *erastes* governed by *mania* according to the traditional conception of the relationship.³⁰

Given that in Socrates' first speech the lover disguises himself as a non-lover, regardless of whether the two conceptions of *eros* from Lysias' and Socrates' first speech are the same, the speakers themselves are radically different. In contrast to the cold-hearted non-lover of Lysias' speech, the "non-lover" of Socrates' first speech expresses a "real concern for the boy's welfare....[particularly the] moral welfare of the boy, a concern which would have been unconvincing to attribute to a genuine cold-blooded sensualist" (Hackforth, p. 40). This implicit selflessness is shown through his concern for the "educating of the soul" (241c5) and study of "divine" philosophy (239B4-6).³¹

As the "non-lover" is actually a "lover" of the youth, he grasps the potential danger concerning the boy's welfare at the hands of lovers.³² For this reason he attempts to protect the youth from the harmful lover and from the lover within himself which he hides from the youth and represses within himself.

This concern further comes across in that he cares how the *eromenos* sees him, and what he feels towards him, as he desires to please the *eromenos* and be loved in return.³³ Because of this empathy and anxiety, he suppresses his passion, turning it "in against itself. Gripped by powerful feelings that he is uncertain of satisfying, Socrates'

³⁰ As "the supposed speaker, in his discourse, is to be not a cold-blooded sensualist making a disgraceful 'business proposition,' but a 'lover' astute enough to cloak his passion under an appearance of indifference [, t]his gives Socrates a double advantage over Lysias. He safeguards his own character by abstaining from even a playful defence of a morally disgraceful thesis, and he leaves himself free, if he pleases, to urge subsequently that the apparent reasonability of the speech is only the simulated rationality of a madman, since the client into whose mouth it is put is really inspired all the time by 'romantic' unreason" (A. E. Taylor, p. 303).

³¹ "His arguments like those of his predecessors, professedly appeal to self-interest, but to self-interest more enlightened, comprehensive, and far-sighted". (Plato, *Phaedrus*, notes by Thompson (1868))

³² "The wily friend (237b) asserts that the lover keeps the beloved away from 'divine philosophy'. He must know, for he himself is caught up in this kind of love, after all, as much as he conceals it... This specific mode of life is led to reveal itself in its true nature." (Friedlander, pp. 225-6)

³³ "Precisely because he does not want to use the boy for sex, but is really in love, he is sufficiently concerned for the feelings of the other to imagine how things seem from his standpoint, and in particular to appreciate vividly how his own weathered and alarmingly mature physique must look to one still fresh of limb [240c1-6, d6-e2]. These are the anxieties of passionate involvement; and the theme is notable for its total absence from Lysias' speech (indeed, Lysias' persona gives no sign of any empathetic appreciation of the boy's feelings)." (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 98)

non-lover turns hostile against the very pleasure that he longs to taste” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 98) as well as against himself.³⁴

This repression and self-hate indicates that the “non-lover” is concerned with ethics (a twisted ethics) for the reason that he seeks the good for his *eromenos*. Resembling, due to his “unsophisticated” ethical character, the “honour-loving” person,³⁵ he brings to mind the lower mysteries in the *Symposium* (208c6-7), “to become famous, ‘to lay up glory immortal forever’”. Also this seems to allude to the white horse of Socrates’ second speech; “that...on the more honourable side is upright... a lover of glory, but with temperance and modesty... and needs no whip being driven by the word of command alone” (253d3-e1; trans. Hackforth³⁶), a correlation made by Ferrari (“Platonic Love” p. 264) in that the well-behaved white horse represents the love of honour and propriety (253d6; cf. the level of aspiration attained in the Lesser Mysteries). For this reason, like the white horse, Socrates’ speaker exemplifies *sophrosune* which in this context is “the moderation approved by conventional morality” (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, pp. 71-2). The motivation of the white horse “is desire to do what the law enjoins; to remain within the bounds of social propriety” (“Platonic Love”, p. 266). Yet the white horse who is “driven by the word of command alone” has not seen the forms and therefore was limited in his understanding but obeys (“Platonic Love” pp. 265-6). Likewise Socrates’ “non-lover” obeys traditional morality without rationally understanding why, which according to Ferrari results in “self-hate”³⁷ (*Listening to the Cicadas*, pp. 100-102) allied to hypocrisy.

³⁴ “The whole speech is therefore an exercise in suppressing his deepest feelings. It is no exaggeration, indeed, to see it as a speech of self-hate.” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 98) His awareness of the inappropriateness of the relationship leads towards self-hate as his desires point towards the detriment of someone he loves which undermine his self-image/value as, seeing from the point of view of the victim, he sees himself as the abuser/tyrant.

³⁵ Through representing “the ordinary person” (Hackforth, p. 48; also Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 101) in part, “the Socratic persona’s high-minded allusions to the ‘training of the soul’ and to ‘divine philosophy’ seem to put him on a rather more exalted level than the average, although still lacking in philosophic sophistication. We might compare the portrait of the honour-loving ‘timocratic’ man of the *Republic* (VIII 548b sq.), who is second only to the philosopher in ethical character. The honour-loving person prizes what is best – above the mere satisfaction of his appetite for pleasure; but because he lacks a true philosophic education, he has not reasoned himself into this course but is following tradition: obeying the voice of the father.” (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 101)

³⁶ Hackforth translation unless specified.

³⁷ Ferrari sees this repressive nature in the renunciation of desire as making the speaker of Socrates’ first speech “gothic and gloomy, and at times almost maudlin (esp. 240a6; 241c2-6)” (*Cicadas*, p. 99). This results from the fact that he is “not really understanding why he should keep his appetite for pleasure in

Despite his lack of understanding, Socrates' "non-lover" is far more ethical than that of Lysias, which makes his argument more convincing, lifting the argument to a higher moral level.³⁸ Therefore, though sharing a common understanding of *eros* with Lysias' speech, the speaker of Socrates' first speech demonstrates a substantial moral progression (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 95).

However this concern for the *eromenos*' well-being can also be seen as the surfacing of another type of love. Hackforth interprets this concern as the "lover peeping through the disguise—not indeed the *σκαϊὸς ἐραστῆς* but the true lover as conceived by Socrates and Plato; in fact we get a glimpse of the *ἐραστῆς par excellence*, Socrates himself" (Hackforth, p. 40). As we have previously noted, *eros* in this speech as in the speech of Lysias, is *hubris* or irrational passionate desire/wantonness directed towards physical beauty (Hackforth, p. 41), a type of *eros* which in neither of his speeches does Socrates condone (Hackforth, p. 48; also see Ferrari, "Platonic Love", p. 263) as it nourishes the lower appetitive part of the soul promoting disharmony and making a

check, he simply represses it; with the result we might expect. The repressed appetite, as Plato imagines it, is disavowed in public but burns bright within the secret recesses of his soul" (*Cicadas*, p. 101). This position results in "the hypocritical refusal to acknowledge the passion he longs to indulge; the repression of pleasure without proper understanding of why it should be repressed, or of what its proper place might be; and a consequent hostility and harshness towards it in his public stance" (*Cicadas*, p. 102). This harshness resembles puritanism. "We have heard in Socrates' lover's voice the voice of puritanism: by which I mean an automatic hostility towards pleasure as such, and an inability to integrate pleasure in an honest fashion with the pursuit of the good. And in the popular and encyclopedic conception of the history of Western philosophy, this is of course often thought of as Plato's own voice. That this is a mishearing is quite clear even from so classic a work as the *Republic*, in which we read, for example at IX 586d4-587a2, that all parts of the soul and classes in the state have their appropriate pleasures, and that one of the results of pursuing the good is that each element can enjoy its pleasure without infringing on the pleasure of the others. But the *Phaedrus* does represent perhaps his most concerted reaction against puritanism. Of course, Plato too never fails to oppose the goal of pleasure to the goal of what is best. But he is not hostile to pleasure as such; rather, he holds that the true philosopher, precisely because he does not pursue the philosophic life primarily for the pleasure that it brings, will get to enjoy not only the pleasure appropriate to the philosophic life as such but also, and in due proportion, the pleasures of the more commonplace practices. Pleasure, then, would be like a mislaid key: you only find it when you stop looking for it. So in the mythic hymn we will see Socrates transcend the simple opposition of pleasure and the good, and find a place for love, and its attendant delights, in the pursuit of what is best." (*Cicadas*, p. 100)

³⁸ Rather than Lysias' focus on means with a desired goal of securing his desired ends at all cost, "Socrates' character, in contrast, begins by discussing not means but ends, and stresses that ends can come into conflict" (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 95). "Plato means Socrates' non-lover to come across as having the higher moral tone. His explicit distinction between pleasure and what is best, his talk of ethical rather than merely prudential conflict between these goals, his higher valuation of 'educating the soul' (241c5) and of what he calls 'divine philosophy' (*he theia philosophia*, 239b4) – whatever his intentions, he boasts a distinctively moral superiority to the type of lover whom he would supplant" (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 99), which gives "him further the opening for lifting the whole argument to a worthier moral level by insisting on the supreme importance of the moral goods which are jeopardized by compliance" (A. E. Taylor, p. 304).

philosophical ascent impossible (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 71). However, this lover impersonating a non-lover in his effort to dissuade the boy from giving himself to his lovers (men like himself), is exhibiting not self-interest which characterized Lysias' speaker but selfless love in his desire to promote the boy's ethical well-being. Though possessed by the negative carnal form of *eros* defined in Socrates' first speech and exemplified in Lysias' speech, in his self-revelation Socrates' "non-lover" redefines or more precisely suggests the presence of another, alternative, understanding of *eros*. This is perceivable through his seeking not his own carnal satisfaction but, inseparable from his own pursuit of ethical perfection, consciously pursuing the good and ethical perfection of the beloved, which undercuts Vlastos' critique of the love of the individual in Plato.³⁹ This is a moment when the negative category of the lover is transcended, acting as a point of transition between the lover as bad and the lover as good. At this moment the lover though describing love as negative demonstrates love to be positive through his concern for the beloved. He is himself the site, point of convergence and battleground for these two opposing forms of love; a paradox pointing to a more adequate understanding of *eros* which is based on an examination of the inner psychology and healing of this "non-lover" through divinely inspired *eros*, the source of this self-less love, which is the subject of Socrates' second speech.

³⁹ This is to affirm with Nussbaum that the *Phaedrus* seriously presents a notion of the love of the individual, but, unlike Nussbaum, to maintain that this theory did not occur in Socrates' second speech alone following the recantation, but was actually present prior to the recantation in Socrates' first speech in the concern the "non-lover" has for the youth, lending support to the view of an ironic unveiling as opposed to a radical reversal of past views as described by Nussbaum. Friedlander can be seen to argue that this was already present in the subject matter of Lysias' speech which determined why Plato chose it. "In the definitions and organization of Socrates' first speech, something else seems to come through which transcends the field of rhetorical technique. The subject to be discussed, love, is something that leads beyond the oratory into the depths of human existence. If Plato had not seen these possibilities, he would not have chosen Lysias' lecture as the point of departure for his dialogue" (Friedlander, p. 224). In keeping with Nussbaum's view that the *Phaedrus* puts in question Vlastos critique of the love of the individual in Plato's dialogues, Ferrari writes "Genuine love has a different goal: neither friendship as such, nor (still less) sexual gratification, but ... the common good of the lovers. But both friendship and, if not gratification, at least the passion that attends sexual arousal, belong to the loving relationship, and never so truly to any other." (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 94)

C. THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF IRONY, *EROS* AND ETHICS

Turning to technique for a moment, given Kierkegaard's perception that for Plato the ironist is equated with the seducer, this ironic unveiling is an act of seduction. This is lent support by Hackforth in his analogy of the relation of teacher and student with *erastes* and *eromenos*, likening education to an act of seduction which Plato envisages as a luring of the student to philosophy,⁴⁰ shown most explicitly in Socrates' attempted seduction of Phaedrus to philosophy. Socrates exploits the tradition of rhetoric to make his point that Phaedrus must give himself to a true lover, that is, on the *Phaedrus*' account, a philosopher. Socrates uses Lysias' content to attract and gain Phaedrus' respect through improving upon his rhetoric in terms of style, showing himself to be a better rhetorician as the first step in his persuasion of Phaedrus⁴¹ to abandon sophistry for philosophy. As education depends upon language, in order to communicate at all Socrates must come down to Phaedrus' level using the language most comprehensible to Phaedrus, the system of names and values given to things, products of Phaedrus' personal history, in order to reach any sort of common understanding or unity which will allow for conversation.⁴² Thus through "following the grain" (Hobbs, *Personal Communication*), taking on Lysias' conception of *eros*, a sense of familiarity is established and a commonness of language which forms an initial bridge or form of unity, by which differences can be negotiated. This negotiation of difference occurs through subtly shifting points of reference. Socrates' superiority results in destabilizing Phaedrus' confidence in Lysias. Furthermore, the shifting of the figure of the non-*erastes* in his first speech to a pretend "non-*erastes*" who experiences not only *eros* but also concern for the *eromenos*' welfare, indicating a form of heavenly *eros* which in this context appears

⁴⁰ Taking the analogy literally, Sayre (pp. 126-7) strongly opposes what he sees as the physical seduction of the *eromenos*/student in that it prevents the student from advancing along the path of philosophy by blocking them from an ascent to the forms.

⁴¹ Socrates' seduction works on three levels. On the first, Socrates uses Lysias' content to attract and gain Phaedrus' respect through improving upon his rhetoric in terms of style, showing himself to be a better rhetorician; then in Socrates' second speech, Socrates leads Phaedrus through using Phaedrus' preferred rhetorical language into a love dialectic, an erotic relation which is nonetheless abstinent, and thereby seeks to help Phaedrus to ascend towards the third level, contemplation of the forms which lie beyond human love relations, at which time the teacher and student will regain their wings.

⁴² See Christopher Norris, *Truth and the Ethics of Criticism*, Ch. 2; also Angela Hobbs: Plato is "both revolutionary and conservative in that he uses traditional language, stereotypes and associated implications to persuade" (*Personal Communication*).

closer to a mixture of selfless love and moral concern, so that the “masked lover’s” selfless love undermines the established conception of uncontrolled *eros* in Socrates’ first speech, thereby alters the points of reference and suggests the need to redefine new limits for *eros*.

Having gained Phaedrus’ respect by reorganizing and improving Lysias’ speech rhetorically, thereby showing himself to be the better rhetorician, Socrates turns to the content of Lysias’ speech in his second speech and proceeds to correct it. Phaedrus is represented as a lover of rhetoric. In the *Symposium*, his speech “is full of references to myths and the poet. It is Phaedrus who brings up the story of Boreas and Oreithyia earlier in this dialogue; and Socrates later describes him as *philomousos*, ‘the lover of the Muses’ (259b).⁴³ Thus the means by which he is most easily touched is through rhetoric. Socrates responds to his need by composing a rhetorical speech. Hence Socrates’ second speech is “poetical; it is introduced with a host of poetic allusions as the speech of Stesichorus of Himera⁴⁴ and at the end Socrates describes it as poetically worded ‘of necessity, for Phaedrus’ benefit’—a hint that the poetic style is in part *ad hominem*, to suit Phaedrus’ taste, or indeed his very soul. The Palinode thus exemplifies the rhetorical and persuasive skills which Socrates requires of a true orator in the second half of the dialogue” (Rutherford, pp. 256-7),⁴⁵ in order to seduce and persuade him of a position which is the antithesis of what Phaedrus held previously to be true. Yet once again this is not Socrates’ usual form of presentation as “giving a polished speech of this sort is not characteristic of his engagement with *logos*” (Hackforth, p. 37).

However, to convince or even communicate with Phaedrus, Socrates employs what Griswold (“Irony”, p. 92) terms the fourth type of Socratic irony. Here Socrates is advocating a thesis which he “criticizes severely” in another part of the dialogue in order to bring Phaedrus to the point of “accepting on his own terms the position of Socrates”. Socrates starts where Phaedrus is, assuming Lysias’ position since Phaedrus as an

⁴³ Rutherford, p. 257, note 28; See Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 226.

⁴⁴ The second speech is the “speech of a poet, Stesichorus... and in so saying Socrates assumes a disguise and tells a lie—things that could not have happened in the heroic literature of the Ideal City” (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 225) presumably of the *Republic*. Perhaps she is being sarcastic here because, as clearly evident from the myth of metals in the *Republic*, dishonesty and irony were inevitably a part of the *Republic*, suggesting the ideal to be not such an ideal as Nussbaum implies.

⁴⁵ Socrates’ recommendation in the *Phaedrus* (271c12-272b2) is here put into practice. “Socrates knows his interlocutors and skilfully adapts his approach”. (Guthrie, “Plato the Man and his Dialogues”, p. 416)

historical being is always dependent upon his previously learnt language and basic knowledge. However, this Socratic use of irony, the assuming of Lysias' position, seems an act of imitation and deception on Socrates' part. This appears to be problematic in that, though revering wisdom and truth, Socrates seems to violate his allegiance to the pursuit of wisdom in attempting to persuade Phaedrus to pursue wisdom, a method/tendency not restricted to the *Phaedrus* alone.⁴⁶ As we shall note later in this chapter, Plato also has Socrates in another manner undermine this second speech, further indicating that this is not an act of deception simply but a tool of irony employed to serve the overall purpose of the dialogue. In this way Plato employs Socratic irony to serve the end of Platonic irony, implying that the means, though implementing a form of deception initially, is justified by the end of the development of reflective thought.

The acknowledgement of Socrates' irony is dramatized through the covering and uncovering of his head. The most straightforward understanding of the covering of the head and its uncovering is as a tool of irony to illustrate the veiling and unveiling of the objective or universal truth. For Socrates Lysias exemplifies a state of intellectual blindness. In order to illustrate this Socrates veils his head (237a4) when presenting the thesis of Lysias in his first speech, then unveils himself (243b6) while recanting, dramatizing the revealing of truth, which he presents in his second speech (Hackforth).⁴⁷ This is heightened by Socrates' citing of Stesichorus who, blinded for condemning and shaming Helen, through his recantation recovers his sight. The veiled Socrates in the speech resembling Lysias shows visually that, though Lysias thinks himself *sophos*, he is in fact blind, whereas Socrates through unveiling himself and then formulating a lyrical description of the soul shows himself to be the possessor and revealer of truth; this is done in a mythical form, seemingly inspired by the gods, combining the third and the fourth form of madness (*Phaedrus*, 249e), the madness of the Muses and that of love

⁴⁶ This problem concerning deception is not restricted to the *Phaedrus* but arises with regard to "various 'myths' in other dialogues, and in any number of poetically 'sweetened' or rhetorically elaborate passages" (Barker, 2002), such as the myth of the metals in the *Republic*. Also see *Charmides* 155b-157d in which Critias and Socrates plan to fool Charmides into believing Socrates can cure him of a headache in order to lure him into a conversation, hence dialectics: "Why not [Socrates] said, if only he will come" (*Charmides* 155b6).

⁴⁷ This dialogue not only represents a subtle distortion of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in which an intellectually blind Oedipus physically blinds himself at the time he gains intellectual vision, but furthermore it is theatrical, a constant shifting of disguises and even roles as in a drama.

which in the *Phaedrus* are both classified as exemplifying the highest position of the soul, paralleling the ascents to the good and the beautiful, which are not clearly distinguished. Here the two appear together with little explanation (*Phaedrus* 248d). The ethical interpretation of Socrates' covering of his head relates to shame and intentional deception. Socrates covers his head so that he "can rush through [his] speech at top speed without looking at [Phaedrus] and breaking down for shame" (*Phaedrus* 237a). His wish to speak quickly and his inability to establish eye contact with Phaedrus reveals his dishonesty and duplicity. Though seeking Phaedrus' good ultimately, his conversion to philosophy, Socrates is trying to manipulate and seduce Phaedrus out of his support of Lysias into a love for himself.

D. INTRODUCTION TO SOCRATES' SECOND SPEECH: SOCRATES' IDENTITY

A moment of totalization⁴⁸ contributes to and is perhaps indispensable for this act of persuasion. Socrates in uncovering himself does claim to be himself the possessor of knowledge of love (as in *Symposium* 177d-e, 198d), and the true source of understanding of love, i.e. a *sophos* rather than a philosopher, which enables him to claim the role of educator in love, in contrast to Sayre's analysis concerning the *Symposium*. This is a highly suggestive act on the part of Socrates, bringing together universal and particular, the one and the many for one instant under the name of Socrates. Such moments can result in the fixation exemplified by Alcibiades who sees Socrates as, in Kierkegaard's words, "holding the Idea as personal property" (*Concept of Irony*, pp. 48-9). Socrates in the *Phaedrus* enacts this moment of totalization by magnetically drawing Phaedrus towards himself not only as a reflection of the form of the beautiful and good, but also subjectively as an individual with whom he can engage in a love relation as exemplified by the lovers of Socrates' second speech. Yet as the love relation acts as an element in the pursuit of truth, this truth claim though deceptive acts as a means of drawing the beloved

⁴⁸ The totalization is, of course, that involved in purporting to unify universal and particular in a single totality.

into a dialectical erotic relation in which truth will be most effectively pursued.⁴⁹

This moment of totalization, the coming together of the universal and particular can be seen as characteristic of a *daimon*, the role of intermediary between the finite and infinite, linking this discussion back to our previous discussion of *eros* with regard to the *Symposium*. Significantly, directly following his recantation Socrates states that *mania* is not evil but “the greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven sent” (244a7-b1). Socrates then distinguishes four types of madness: inspired prophecy (244b1-d4), healing and purification (244d5-e7), possession by the Muses (245a1-9), and *eros* sent by heaven “a gift of the gods, fraught with the highest bliss” (245c1-2). The Socrates of the *Phaedrus* is represented as prophet, healer, poet and lover. Socrates states before beginning his palinode that he “is a prophet, though not an entirely serious one... but good enough for my purposes.” (242c4-5; trans. Rowe).⁵⁰ Ferrari suggests that Socrates also takes upon himself the role of the healer, recanting like Stesichorus who “atoned for his blasphemy against Helen by public recantation, and cured himself, in the process, of blindness which the blasphemy had incurred. So too, Socrates will abjure his earlier blasphemy against the god of Love, adopting what he calls this ‘ancient spell of purification’ (*katharmos arkhaios*, 243a4)” (*Cicadas*, p. 115).⁵¹ Furthermore, Socrates competes with Lysias through reorganizing and correcting his speech, showing himself the better rhetorician and ultimately poet, as exemplified by the poetic use of language employed in Socrates’ second speech to entrance Phaedrus (for Socrates as artist, see Ferrari, *Cicadas*, pp. 16-21).⁵² And lastly, as we have seen, Socrates is the exemplary lover who tries to woo Phaedrus to philosophy. Thus Plato represents Socrates as embodying four types of divinely inspired *mania*; prophetic,

⁴⁹See the Introduction to Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, for discussion as to whether ordinary philosophical argument is hubristic.

⁵⁰ Ferrari thinks “Socrates hedges over his prophetic power—just as he cannot espouse myth wholeheartedly, but only as a necessary resource from which he must maintain a careful distance”. (*Cicadas*, p. 116)

⁵¹ “Dionysiac or initiatory madness (*μανία τελεοτική* 265b) introduces many terms associated with cathartic procedures both in medicine and in the mysteries.” (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 75)

⁵² Also see Cornford, *Sapientiae*, pp. 67, 70, 76-7. For the connection of the Muses and prophecy, “poetry being the language of prophecy” (*Sapientiae*, p. 79) see Plato’s *Ion*, 535B, 534C—Ion’s “soul, rapt out of himself by inspiration, was present at the events he described in Ithaca or Troy”. Poets work not by art but by “divine possession”. “The god deprives them of their sober senses and uses them as instruments, like singers of oracles and inspired seers, in order that we who hear them may know that it is not they who speak things of such high worth, but the god himself who speaks to us through them.” (*Sapientiae*, p. 79)

healing, poetic and erotic (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 118),⁵³ demonstrating Socrates to be prophet, healer, poet and lover.⁵⁴ As the exemplification of inspired *eros* in the *Symposium* he is considered to be a *daimon*, yet unlike Plato of the *Symposium*'s characterization of Socrates as the personification of *eros*, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates not only exemplifies *eros* but also the other three forms of divine *mania*. As the exemplification of a *daimon*, who mediates between the universal and particular, the mortal and immortal,⁵⁵ the content of his second speech must be taken seriously.

Having established his "identity", Socrates begins his second speech displaying the art of healing through the unveiling of truth. After analyzing the immortality of the soul,⁵⁶ he describes mythologically the soul's subsequent fall and ascent.⁵⁷ The pivotal

⁵³ "He reproduces with singular completeness every form of Plato's divine madness, every corresponding aspect of his god Apollo and his prototype Orpheus, and sums up in his own person all the characters which he describes as typifying the final, highest incarnation before the return to divine bliss; seer, minstrel, physician and leader of men." (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, pp. 121-6)

⁵⁴ Cornford (*Sapientiae*, p. 87) notes that "the three types which [Plato brings] together—prophet, poet, and sage—had originally been united in a single figure." "The Union of prophet, poet and wise man in the same person is no novel invention of Plato or of Pythagoras." "Orpheus, as Hermias remarks [in *Phaed.* 244A (p. 88. 25 Couvreur; Kern, *Orph. Fr. P.* 51)], combined all the forms of divine madness, as founder of the mysteries, prophet, poet and son of the Muse Calliope, and instructor of Musaeus" (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 89; also see p. 90).

⁵⁵ Like Nussbaum, Friedlander (pp. 226-7) thinks that the content of the first two speeches is the same, both conflicting with the representation of *Eros* as god (242e2). For this reason Friedlander refers to the *Symposium*, where Diotima describes/shows *Eros* to be a *daimon*, "an intermediary power, who mediates between gods and men and thus transmits the art of prophecy and other priestly powers from gods to men and from men to gods. It is these powers or types of ecstasy that will be formed into an ordered system in the second speech of Socrates here in the *Phaedrus*."

⁵⁶ This dry proof is analyzed by R. Bett in "Immortality and the Nature of the Soul", pp. 1-26 and by Robinson in "The Argument for Immortality in Plato's *Phaedrus*", pp. 345-53 as noted by Cobb (p. 150). Cobb finds this proof "oddly out of place. Just as Socrates begins a great mythological and poetic discourse, we find a dry highly abstract argument on an issue that seems intangible at best. The claim that the soul is immortal is not required for what is said about the nature and importance of love, except as an element in mythical stories he tells. Moreover, a demonstration of the literal truth of the claim is not needed to include it as an element in the myth; there are many fantastic elements in the stories for which no proof is offered or accepted" (Cobb, p. 150). However, by logically proving the soul to be immortal, it acts as a point (of truth) or hinge between the dialogue and the myth, the point of stability from which the speculative imagination takes off, similar to the point of realism from which abstraction departs. The use of allegory following creates images to represent a likeness of "things" which *logos* can not express, indicating that *eros* as madness goes beyond *logos*, supporting Hackforth's position though opposed by Cobb (p. 156).

⁵⁷ "For the mythical details of the soul's fall, peregrinations and recovery, Plato has relied largely on Pythagorean and Orphic lore, in part by way of Empedocles (vol. II, 251-3). The prologue of Parmenides may also be related; see Skemp, *TMPLD* 5 n. 5." (Guthrie, "Plato the Man and his Dialogues", p. 402; also see Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 46; also see pp. 45, 54-8, 91-112). From this reading it appears that the Plotinian strand of Neo-Platonist philosophy finds its sources in Pythagoras as distinct from Socrates' influence upon Plato.

point between the fall and ascent is the moment of falling in love.⁵⁸ By means of his analysis of the soul through the image of the charioteer and his horses engaged in the seduction of the beloved, Socrates shows the linking of *eros* and philosophy in the healing and purification of the soul in poetic language, as an act of *eros* directed at Phaedrus.⁵⁹

E. SOCRATES' SECOND SPEECH

Through using an imagistic and symbolic language associated with myth,⁶⁰ thus becoming more rhetorical than the rhetorician, Socrates attempts to sooth and “flatter” Phaedrus into “self-abandonment to the *mania* of *eros*”⁶¹ in order to contemplate the forms, thereby attempting to wean “Phaedrus from dependence upon written forms and

⁵⁸ See Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 80; A. E. Taylor (p. 305) calls it “the true psychology of love”. Thus *contra* Nussbaum, “Socrates, then, is not much more concerned in the *Phaedrus* than he was in the *Symposium* to answer the questions about the life of the philosophic couple as it develops. For in the *Symposium*, the development we witness was of the philosophic lover alone; while in the *Phaedrus*, the focus is rather on the beginnings of love between philosophers than on its development” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” p. 268; see *Cicadas*, pp. 182-4, *Fragility*, pp. 182-4).

⁵⁹ Friedlander believes that 243E demonstrates that Socrates second speech is “unmistakeably addressed to Phaedrus himself” (P. Friedlander, *Die Platonischen Schriften*, p. 485; cited by Hackforth, p. 53). Hackforth agrees with him though he does “not think that Socrates’ veiled suggestion that Phaedrus himself is the boy, and Phaedrus’ acceptance of it, are anything more than playful” (Hackforth, p. 53). “A final light-hearted touch is the playful way Socrates implies that his speech is really directed at (seducing) Phaedrus and Phaedrus accepts the role (243e)” (Cobb, p. 147). In this instance I am more inclined to side with Friedlander and Nussbaum who view this as a moment of interpenetration between what is being spoken and what is being lived, philosophy and life (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, pp. 211-212).

⁶⁰ Further emphasizing Socrates’ role as *daimon* and the importance of the speech, Socrates’ second speech is written as a hymn. According to Rutherford, this speech is “referred to by its author as a ‘mythical hymn’ (265c1), and provides a means of describing the truly real world to which the human soul naturally belongs and to which it always longs to return. This is not dialectically demonstrable vision, and so it is appropriate that it should be couched in mythical form, and that the idea of poetic inspiration should be used—poetry, elsewhere treated as the enemy of philosophy, is here employed in its service. It is admitted, not only in the later passage which plays down the significance of speech, but within the speech itself, that this is an approximation, an imperfect account, not a statement of absolute truths: ‘To say what kind of thing the soul is would require a long exposition, and one calling for utterly superhuman powers; but to say what it is like requires a shorter one, and within human capacity. So let us speak in the latter way’ (246a). ‘And as for the realm above the heavens, there is no poet who has ever yet hymned it a it deserves, nor will there ever be. But it is like this...’ (247c). Plato surely does not intend his readers to press the imagery and the detailed doctrine too hard.” (Rutherford, pp. 258-9, who refers *Phaedo* 114d, and *Republic* 414a, 533a. Also see the “Seventh letter”.)

⁶¹ Warner (“Appropriating the *Phaedrus*”, p. 12) interprets Phaedrus as initially not able to make his own this self-abandonment to the *mania* of *eros* because he is too attracted to cleverness and the skills of technical control to yet neighbour *mania*. Socrates uses this failure as an “integral part of a more indirect wooing of Phaedrus, to philosophy as the complement to rhetoric”. His view, in some ways influenced by Nussbaum (*Fragility*, p. 211), is not only correct as an interpretation of Plato, but important when considering the necessity of surrender in any act of learning.

the authority of others to a recognition of the superior value of writing in the soul” (Warner, “Appropriating the *Phaedrus*”, p. 8)⁶² where conviction is attained through questioning and response with a “fitting soul”. He does this by describing from a psychological view the seduction of the beloved by the lover demonstrating the richness of this relation, rendering it appealing and unforgettable.

In his second speech, Socrates is moving one step further than before. While “in Socrates’ first speech, love is an “innate desire for pleasure leading to *hubris*” as opposed to *sophrosune*, in Socrates’ second speech *eros* is one out of four types of divine possession which is a positive type of madness, an “inspired ‘frenzy’ which is productive of good.” (A. E. Taylor, p. 305)⁶³ Through an analysis of the lover’s feelings,⁶⁴ Socrates shows how this can lead to the philosophic life through the pursuit of virtue for the beloved and therefore the lover himself, while taking account of the struggle between different components within the soul of the lover.⁶⁵

In the seduction of the beloved by the lover rehearsed in Socrates’ second speech,

⁶²According to Cornford concerning *Symposium* (209d-e), “the educator begets children of a fairer and more lasting kind, by planting his thoughts in living minds, where they will live again to beget yet another generation of spiritual children” (“The Doctrine of Eros”, p. 125). This is accomplished through conversation, the dialectical structure of question and answer.

⁶³ This divine possession stands in opposition to madness as a “human ailment”. (Guthrie, “Plato the Man and his Dialogues”, pp. 429-430)

⁶⁴ Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” p. 263.

⁶⁵ “The tripartite analysis of the soul in the *Phaedrus* also permits a more exact appreciation than in the *Symposium* of how it feels to fall in love, and why this feeling should awaken aspiration to the philosophic life. As in the *Symposium*, lovers are approved of who are not simply attracted to the beauty of their beloved’s body but seek also to mould his character (*Phaedrus* 250e-251a, 252c-253c); unlike in the *Symposium*, Socrates takes us behind the scenes of such a lover’s modest and respectful behavior towards the boy (254e8-255a1), and the spectacle he reveals to us within the lover’s soul is a struggle of the utmost violence (253d-254c).” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love”, p. 265)

Nussbaum writes that the speaker, the poet from Himera, describes passionate love by taking “the same experience described by the earlier speeches in detached and clinical terms and enters into it, capturing through imagery and emotive language the feeling of being in a state of *mania*” (*Fragility*. p. 215 also see A. Lebeck’s “The Central Myth of Plato’s *Phaedrus*”, pp. 267-90). Ferrari, stating that the first two speeches describe love madness from the outside while Socrates’ second speech describes the *mania* of love from the inside, “[finding] the good in love-madness (244a6-8). . . seeing the world now through the eyes of the lover” (p. 263), also suggests the illusion that this is the same kind of love. The first two speeches describe a negative experience in which the lover is uncontrolled and selfish whereas Socrates’ second speech describes the lover controlling his passions in order to develop and to help his beloved intellectually. Thus one is a selfish/bad and the other a selfless/good type of love. To state that one is outside and the other inside therefore misses the point as they are two distinct types of love, earthly and heavenly. The three speeches represent “a new version of a genuinely Platonic tension—the contrast between noble and ignoble love” (Friedlander, p. 227), which are made to form a progression. (One might indeed read the outside as body/flesh and the inside as soul indicating a progression from the emphasis on the body to the soul which would prove coherent with these notions of *eros* and further explain the significance of Socrates’ prayer.)

the interaction between the parts of the lover's soul when encountering the beloved demonstrates the lover's extreme sensitivity towards beauty.

"Now when the driver beholds the person of the beloved, and causes a sensation of warmth to suffuse the whole soul, he begins to experience a tickling or pricking of desire, and the obedient steed, constrained now as always by modesty, refrains from leaping upon the beloved. But this fellow, heeding no more the driver's goad or whip, leaps and dashes on, sorely troubling his companion and his driver and forcing them to approach the loved one and remind him of the delights of love's commerce. For a while they struggle, indignant that he should force them to a monstrous and forbidden act."⁶⁶ (*Phaedrus*, 253e6-b2)

⁶⁶In the *Laws* 636c3-6, "this pleasure is held to have been granted by nature to male and female when conjoined for the work of procreation; the crime of male with male, or female with female, is an outrage on nature and a capital surrender to lust of pleasure". The Cretans are accused of the creation of the tale of Ganymede as a justification for homosexual pleasure (*Laws* 636d1-5). Dover (*Greek Homosexuality*, p. 165) interprets this as indicating that "The Athenian speaker declares that the pleasure of heterosexual intercourse is 'granted in accordance with nature', whereas homosexual pleasure is 'contrary to nature and a crime caused by failure to control the desire for pleasure.'" Plato writes that "male does not touch male in this way because the action is unnatural" (*Laws* 836c4-5). Vlastos ("The Individual as an Object of Love", pp. 25-26) likewise interprets "against nature" as opposed to homosexual not heterosexual intercourse. Vlastos states that at moments Plato appears to view the activity of homosexual union as a sin, though not heterosexual union as demonstrated in *Symposium* where love is the "begetting upon the beautiful in body and soul". Furthermore, it is condemnable for "its deliberate murder of the race and its wasting of seed of life on a stony rocky soil, where it will never take root and bear its natural fruit" (839a1-3).

Homosexual activity seems to be prohibited for two reasons, sensual stimulation for the sake of pleasure alone and the demasculinization of the passive male. These two reasons are articulated in *Laws* 836e. Through homosexual copulation the passive male is an example of "unmanliness" as "the impersonator of the female—with his likeness to his model" (*Laws* 836e3-5), while Dover interprets this as the seducer being "open to blame as failing to withstand the temptations of pleasure; the [seduced] as 'mimicking the female'".

In this first position with regard to the *eromenos* we see the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake. "Plato's main concern is to reduce to an unavoidable minimum all activity of which the end is physical enjoyment, in order that the irrational and appetitive element of the soul may not be encouraged and strengthened by indulgence". (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 167) Therefore he writes, to eliminate homosexuality, affairs and incest will result in "untold good. It is dictated, to begin with by nature's own voice, leads to the suppression of the mad frenzy of sex, as well as marriage breach of all kinds, and all manner of excess in meats and drinks, and wins men to affection of their bedded wives. There are also numerous other blessings which will follow" (*Laws* 839a7-b2). "While prohibiting homosexual relations because they go beyond what nature shows to be adequate in sexual pleasure, he does not express an opinion on the naturalness or unnaturalness of the desire to perform the prohibited acts; it is to be presumed, in accordance with the sentiment of his time, that he would regard the desire as an indication that the appetitive element of the soul is insufficiently disciplined" (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 168). (Dover seems to betray his partiality to homosexuality, for "going beyond nature" in terms of pleasure is not what Plato stated, while also showing a seemingly negative position towards heterosexuality as shown when he (*Greek Homosexuality* p. 164) states that in comparison to spiritual procreation, "the literal begetting of progeny by heterosexual intercourse is the gross and material counterpart (206c)".) Nussbaum picks up this point concerning the fear of extreme pleasures in that she believes that Socrates speaks against intercourse as extreme sensual stimulation and as "incompatible with the preservation of reverence and awe for the other as a separate person" (*Fragility*, p. 217; also 219).

In the case of the *eromenos*, the second reason for prohibition lies in the feminization resulting from his passive role. As we noted in the discussion of the speech of Lysias, this role renders the boy unworthy of

The sight of the beautiful person attracts the soul.⁶⁷ Rowe (p. 75) translates 253e5-7 as the lover “catches sight of the light of his love, warming the whole soul through the medium of perception”, thus through the eyes⁶⁸ the whole soul is warmed and awakened. According to de Vries (pp. 173-5)⁶⁹ “it is the erotic power of the eye which is visualized here.”⁷⁰ Though affecting the whole soul,⁷¹ the vision of the beautiful causes the appetitive element to react.⁷²

being a citizen and deprives him of his the rights of citizenship. In this way it is unlawful. For this reason, Plato’s Socrates describes sexual intercourse as disgusting, “terrible, unlawful” (*Phaedrus* 254a) as it is “potentially selfish and/or violent” (though there is some debate as to whether this concerns homosexual or heterosexual intercourse or both). This selfishness and violence is due to the inherent imposition of a hierarchy through sexual intercourse that is incompatible with Socrates’ ‘democratic’ concept of friendship (*philia*). This hierarchy or ‘asymmetricality’ for Lewis (*Four Loves*, pp. 95-6) emerges from sexual difference or the difference of ‘active’ versus ‘passive’ in sexual intercourse, creating an inequality in *philia* which must be inherently ‘democratic’ (Lewis, pp. 66-7). Thus homosexuality not only is a violation of a citizen’s rights (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 109) reducing them to a non-citizen, but furthermore the relation of the *erastes* and *eromenos* can be seen as that of a master and slave (see Lysias’ speech; see also Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, B. IV. A). Functioning like sin it builds walls between individuals blocking communication and destroys dialectical relations. Thus not only is abstinence from homosexuality due to the fear of excessive stimulation causing *mania*, but is also an effort to preserve a sense of respect, equality and separateness.

⁶⁷ Beauty, evoking initially the strongest reaction and the greatest sensitivity, functions as the initial phase in leading the soul towards the good (*Symposium* 210a, 211c). “For sight is the keenest mode of perception vouchsafed us through the body; wisdom, indeed, we cannot see thereby—how passionate our desire for her, if she had granted us so clear an image of herself to gaze upon—nor yet any other of those beloved objects, save only beauty; for beauty alone this has been ordained, to be most manifest to sense and most lovely of them all” (*Phaedrus* 250d). As beauty is the most keenly perceived, the soul experiences beauty initially more strongly than wisdom or any other of the forms. Unlike beauty which by its nature is most manifest and lovely, and therefore “stirs our emotions and appetites, motivating us to undertake its pursuit,... [earthly justice and wisdom] do not engage the guiding appetites and emotions, are harder to discern; they can be grasped only after an initial education in beauty has quickened the intellect” (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 214). “Beauty is that aspect of the divine which is manifest, though dimly, within or through the world of sense. The perception of beauty which comes through the bodily eyes and causes the distraction of love is also the first occasion for the awakening of *Anamnesis*—that mysterious memory of truth once seen by every human soul before it became incarnate. And the awakening of *Anamnesis* is the beginning of philosophy.” (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, pp. 80-83)

⁶⁸ Hackforth (p. 103) interprets the “light of his love” as “the person of the beloved”, his face.

⁶⁹ Rowe, p. 187.

⁷⁰ The manner in which de Vries describes this eye contact makes the lover seem like the negative seducer of Socrates’ first speech, whereas Hackforth rightly views this lover as “deeply sincere” (p. 109), though experiencing some complications in negotiating his desires. Ficino (p. 108), though in other ways original, attaches the same importance to the eyes, and seems more accurate. Ficino describe the beloved’s falling in love as the beauty of the lover being transmitted through the eyes which in turn causes the beloved to fall in love with the lover. “A man’s appearance, which is often very beautiful to see, on account of an interior goodness fortunately given him by God, can send a ray of splendor through those who see him and into their souls. Drawn by this spark as if by a kind of hook, the soul hastens toward the drawer.” (Ficino, p. 108) He defines the hook as being the inner goodness which sparkles in the eye of the beloved, which constitutes the true beauty of appearance. As the beauty of a body or face does not sparkle but only the eye, Ficino seems to capture Plato’s meaning more fully by implying that the beautiful transmitted through the inner beauty of the soul makes itself visible and apparent in the shining of the eyes, the window of the soul,

This vision of physical beauty causes the dark horse to act in such a way as to promote carnal satisfaction, though this is resisted by the soul as a whole,⁷³ so that (perhaps like the “non-lover” of Socrates’ first speech) “the struggle going on within the soul is glimpsed” (Friedlander, p. 225). This is a “desperate battle” (Guthrie, *Plato the*

and thereby draw the beloved forth, making him a lover. *Phaidros*, one notes again, can be translated “sparkling”.

⁷¹ This receptivity of the eyes in receiving the vision of beauty affects not simply the appetite or the intellect but the entire soul composed of the complex unity of the intellect, the spirited and the appetitive. Unlike the progressive detachment of the intellect from the other parts of the personality in the *Symposium* (and *Phaedo*), which for Cornford is a “preparation for death” and in which for Nussbaum also “the intellect is pure and active like the forms, and therefore never passive and receptive”, “the developing soul of the *Phaedrus* is in a very different state. Complex and impure, throbbing with ‘ferment in every part’, fevered and in constant motion, it depends for its growth on just these impure aspects of its condition. In order to be moved towards beauty, this soul must, first of all, be open and receptive. The stream of beauty that enters in at the eyes must be admitted by the whole soul (251B,C). And the crucial moment in its development is a moment not only of reception but of passivity: the roots of the soul’s wings are melted by the warmth of the entering stream. . . All parts of the soul accept and are affected; and they interact with one another in such a way that it becomes impossible to separate them clearly. The growing wings belong to the soul as a whole (232C; cf. 253C, 254C). The deep sensual response to a particular person’s splendor, the emotions of love and awe, the intellectual aspirations that this love awakens—all of these flow together, so that the person feels no gap between thought and passion, but instead, a melting unity of the entire personality. This is no ordinary sexual response to a beautiful body.” (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 216) Through the receptivity of the eyes, all aspects of the soul receive or allow themselves to be affected by the image of the beautiful which neither produces a purely sexual response nor an intellectual reaction but a full integrated response of the whole soul to the beautiful. Reminiscent of Diotima’s description of love as a “bringing forth upon the beautiful in body and soul” in which beauty produces a desire to procreate, one notes again in the *Phaedrus*, that beauty causes a state of harmony and receptivity in the lover which results ultimately in an overflowing of his love into the beloved.

⁷² The dark horse or appetitive part of the soul is the most sensitive part of the soul to beauty, making it reasonable that beauty is first experienced through the appetitive. As the soul is in the prison house of the body, “fast bound therein as an oyster in its shell” (*Phaedrus* 250c), the soul experiences things through the body, so that its experience is coloured by the bodily sensibility. Thus as the dark horse or the appetitive is the most sensitive part of the soul to physical beauty, and the soul more sensitive to beauty than to other forms, therefore the soul is first attracted and directed towards the beautiful by physical beauty.

The dark horse or the appetitive element is the first part of the soul to pursue the beautiful for the interconnected reasons of sensitivity, motivation, cognition and education. Nussbaum identifies three means which the appetitive part of the soul initiates in the pursuit of beauty. As the vision of the beautiful person stirs the appetites and emotions, it is motivational as they move the soul towards the good and beautiful. Furthermore, they are cognitive as they “give the whole person information as to where goodness and beauty are” located, which the intellect alone could not have accomplished. And thirdly they act as a preliminary education to prepare the soul for and render it sensitive to the apprehension of beauty (*Fragility*, p. 215). Furthermore, these three are interconnected as cognition precedes motivation and sensitivity proceeds cognition, showing that as the dark horse is sensitive to beauty it recognizes it and through this cognition it is motivated by it. Therefore, through the interconnection of sensitivity, cognition and motivation, the appetitive part of the soul represented by the dark horse initiates and sustains the soul’s pursuit of the beautiful.

⁷³ Cf. the ego’s resistance to the id’s desires in Freud, (Freud, *Lay Analysis*, p. 23) yet not in order to achieve the fullness of sexual satisfaction, or cultural or scientific achievement (Freud, “Debasement in the Sphere of Love”, p. 190) at a later time, but for a spiritual satisfaction, which Plato envisions as a nonphysical fullness.

Man and his Dialogues, p. 405)⁷⁴, a “conflict within the soul . . . with one part revering the beauty of which it sees the image in its beloved, while another part is filled with a craving for physically crude satisfaction” (Rutherford, p. 257).

The appetitive desires are only put in check once the charioteer, through being attracted by the individual’s unique beauty,⁷⁵ sees in the beloved the vision of the beautiful. The charioteer and steeds

“behold the spectacle of the beloved flashing before them. At that sight the driver’s memory goes back to that form of beauty,⁷⁶ and he sees her once again enthroned by the side of temperance upon her holy seat; then in awe and reverence he falls upon his back, and therewith is compelled to pull the reins so violently that he brings both steeds down on their haunches, the good one willing and unresistant, but the wanton sore against his will... humbled in the end, he obeys the counsel of his driver, and when he sees the fair beloved is like to die of fear. Wherefore at long last the soul of the lover follows after the beloved with reverence and awe.” (*Phaedrus* 54b4-e10)

⁷⁴ Likewise, Ferrari (“Platonic Love”, p. 265) states that “Behind the scene of such a lover’s modest and respectful behavior toward his boy (254e8-255a1) . . . the spectacle he reveals to us within the lover’s soul is a struggle of the utmost violence (253d-254e).”

⁷⁵ As we noted in the section on Nussbaum, the vision of the beautiful itself can be conceived of as the beauty of a particular irreplaceable individual which provokes or links into the greater vision, thereby directing the lover towards it, causing his soul to grow wings (*Fragility*, p. 215). Contrary to Nussbaum, Diotima’s description of ascending from the love of particular beauty in the individual following the recognition that the “beauty of every body is the same” (*Symposium* 210B), does not indicate that the individual is dispensable in that this ascent ends in the begetting of true virtue in others. Also, as we saw, Socrates as the example of philosophical *eros* sought the well-being of the souls of those around him. Here likewise the particular element of the beautiful present in the beloved is indispensable as love is not transferable.

⁷⁶ Ferrari points to the fact that through *anamnesis* the lover “derives the soul-shaking quality of the lover’s experience from its origins in the vision that crowned Diotima’s Greater Mysteries, the vision of the Beautiful itself—considered here not as a state of enlightenment attained only after long struggle, but as a memory of enlightenment stirred by the boy’s beauty (254b), a memory that acts as a potential stimulant to that longer quest (256a7-b7)” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love”, p. 263). However, Ferrari does not equate the vision of the beautiful in the *Phaedrus* with that of the *Symposium*. Unlike in the *Symposium* where the initiate sees “Beauty, independent of what we find beautiful [, the] experience of the inspired lover in the *Phaedrus*, by contrast, is to shuttle in memory between the bodily beauty of the boy and the Beautiful itself. It is to be awoken by an exemplar of Beauty to the conviction that there is such a thing as Beauty. (The boy, too, comes to have this experience seeing the lover’s face transformed by love, made beautiful by the sight of beauty; 255b7-d3)” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love”, p. 268). This calls into question the relationship of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, which Ferrari responds to by stating, “We should refrain from the attempt to situate the inspired lover of the *Phaedrus* at some precise point on the ascent undertaken by Diotima’s initiate. Diotima deals with honour lovers and wisdom lovers separately, in the Lesser and Greater Mysteries; Socrates in the *Phaedrus* melds them into the figure of the inspired lover. This is further evidence that Plato is not concerned to propound a comprehensive unified theory of love” (“Platonic Love,” p. 268), a position which Nussbaum also affirms.

As in 248a1-5 only the charioteer saw the forms, only he recognizes the form of beauty shining through the beauty of the beloved.⁷⁷ This causes him to change his focus from the harmony and order of the team to his memory of Beauty and violently jerk the steeds.⁷⁸ At this point his motivation is distinguished from the white horse in that he is no longer concerned with uniquely “the law” and social propriety but with the “sacred”, the forms of Beauty and Moderation from which the law is derived/ comes,⁷⁹ making this act not only unlawful but “a violation of all that matters” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” p. 266).⁸⁰ Experiencing fear and reverence before the forms,⁸¹ the charioteer violently holds the

⁷⁷ Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” pp. 265-6.

⁷⁸ Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” p. 266.

⁷⁹ “The motivation of charioteer and white horse when together is the desire to do what the law enjoins; to remain within the bounds of social propriety. Even when the charioteer parts company with the noble horse, the sense of staying within bounds does not vanish from his thoughts, for he has a vision not of Beauty alone but Beauty together with Moderation (254b6-7). But it is a different sense. He sees Beauty ‘on its holy seat’ (254b7). The bounds that feature in this vision, then, are the bounds not of law but of the sacred.” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” p. 266)

⁸⁰ “And the act of attacking the boy is avoided not as something socially forbidden but as something simply unbearable, a violation of all that really matters. Nothing in the soul can resist the charioteer at that moment of realization...Although the immediate effect of the charioteer’s seizure is to prevent an outrage of convention and law, the behaviour to which it will lead—as we know from the earlier description of the lover’s antics in the social world—will be anything but conventional. The lover, we read, will for his beloved’s sake ‘disdain the conventions and niceties of which he previously made a show’ (252a4-5); he will give up family, friends, and wealth in order to be with his love. And his behavior makes good sense when seen as the outcome of the charioteer’s shift of focus away from his team. In non-allegorical terms, this would represent someone inclining to act in an otherworldly fashion, as if not tied to a social and timebound existence; ready to throw all else to the winds for the sake of his love. But this is an inclination common to the true lover and the true philosopher—notoriously so. Socrates here puts two clichés into a bottle—the temporary insanity of the infatuated lover, the hopeless impracticality of philosophers...Simply put, his point is that love makes philosophers of us all.” (Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” pp. 266-7)

⁸¹ “The effect of the experience in awakening ‘recollection’ is therefore exceptionally startling” (A. E. Taylor, p. 308). Ficino describes how “lovers fear and worship in some way the sight of the beloved.” (Though Sears and Jayne refer to *Symposium* 192b, this passage clearly describes *Phaedrus* 254a-e) “Certainly it is not anything human that frightens them. . . but that splendour of divinity, shining in the beautiful like the statue of god, compels lovers to marvel, to be afraid, and to worship.” (Ficino, 2:6; also see Santayana, *The Realm of Essence*, p. 116)

Ficino shrewdly comments upon the reverence and fear of the *eromenos*/student subtly suggesting likewise a shift in value and tension. He states, “Even brave and wise men. . . have been accustomed to suffer in the presence of the beloved. Certainly it is not anything human which frightens them, which breaks them, which seizes them. For a human power is always stronger in brave and wiser men. But that splendor of divinity, shining in the beautiful like a statue of god, compels lovers to marvel, to be afraid, and to worship.” (Ficino, 2:6) In recounting the phenomenon of the *erastes* passionately attracted to but revering the form of beauty shining through the *eromenos* (Ficino employs the terminology of Neo-Platonism; see Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1,6,9), Ficino comments that the lover suffers “in the presence of the beloved, *however inferior*”. (The lover seeks the youthful beloved because of his physical beauty (though not uniquely as the beloved is chosen according to the lover’s type. *Phaedrus*, 252e) regardless of the fact that the lover possesses a deeper beauty. Plato appears to be linking youth with beauty in this section. This longing for youthful beauty is a longing for immortality, yet it is one in which the individual has not yet fully realized that beauty of the soul is superior to a beautiful body (*Symposium*. 210b). This clinging to and

dark horse in check,⁸² hence we begin to recognize a correlation between Socrates' second speech and the charioteer.⁸³

pursuit of physical youth, the "fountain of youth", marks a resistance in the *erastes* to his personal bodily finitude.) This acknowledgement that the *eromenos*/student is inferior and the *erastes*/teacher is superior in wisdom and bravery shows paradoxically that what is more beautiful seeks what is less beautiful essentially, regardless of the fact that beauty shines through the beloved physically.

Within Platonic dialogues, the notions of bravery and wisdom are inter-linked. According to Hobbs (*Plato and the Hero*), bravery which in Greek is *andreia* means manliness (strength in battle). Furthermore, courage is used by Plato to promote philosophy; a love of wisdom. It is manly to do philosophy and philosophy makes you manly, thus using the traditional paradigm of manliness to promote philosophy, conventional means to achieve a revolutionary end. Within the ascent by dialectic serving didactic ends, wisdom and bravery are inseparably intertwined, each producing the other.

Thus the claim that the lover is more brave and wise signifies that he is more philosophical, forcefully overcoming obstacles while advancing towards the good, while the *eromenos*/student is less courageous and philosophical, and therefore less advanced and in need of help to advance towards the good. Although the *erastes*/teacher reveres the beauty of the *eromenos*/student, the student, in recognizing his inferiority in courage and wisdom, though he recognizes this ignorance, experiences an equal or greater sense of respect for the teacher which is essential to the process of education. This indicates a reversal of roles as experienced by Alcibiades (*Symposium* 222a6-b3) situating the teacher as *eromenos*, possessing in some form more knowledge, goodness, or spiritual beauty which is desired by the student/*erastes*, reminiscent of the ontological ascent described in the *Symposium*'s (210b-c) which shifts from a focus on the beauty of the body to the beauty of the soul which directly points to the fact that Socrates, the ultimate *eromenos* for Plato, is not physically beautiful (215b).

The divine aspect is enhanced through the evocation or reference to the Eleusian mysteries in 251a noted by Hackforth (p. 95). Cornford writes that similarly the language of the *Symposium* "borrowed from Eleusian mysteries the language of the Sacred Marriage and of the final revelation, when the ancient symbols of the divinity were disclosed to the purified initiate in a sudden blaze of light. The soul is united with divine Beauty, and itself becomes immortal and divine. The offspring of the marriage are not phantoms of goodness like those images of virtue which first inspired love for the beautiful person. The child of Love and Beauty is true virtue, dwelling in the soul that has become immortal, as the lover and beloved of God." (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, pp. 86-7)

⁸² This vision immediately curbs the lover's sensuous desires, prioritizing the intellectual, but simultaneously making him look up to and fear the beloved, as the *eromenos* through his physical beauty is the reflection of the beautiful which the *erastes* seeks to "possess". This vision causes the intellect to apply its force and tame the appetitive.

⁸³In this way we come to realize that Socrates' second speech represents the charioteer in the image of the soul as charioteer and his horses, and that the three speeches of the *Phaedrus* represent the three parts of the soul. "Socrates will fashion 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, for whom there can be no ethical conflict but at most a prudential deferral of the immediate satisfaction of pleasure for the sake of its future maximization; Socrates' man adds to this drama the voice of the white horse, who seeks honour with the same unreflective determination that the 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 the voices in the soul." (Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 102) "When the charioteer is in charge... the entire soul is at its best, and the person lives the good life, the philosophic or 'wisdom-loving' life (256b2-7). (Compare *Republic* IX 586d: The other parts will attain their 'truest' satisfactions when they follow the wisdom-loving part. This I take to be what Socrates means by describing the feathers of the entire soul as nourished by truth.)" (Ferrari, "Platonic Love," p. 264) However the relation of the charioteer to the intellect as represented by Socrates' second speech proves likewise problematic as Socrates' second speech is poetic and mythic which in turn undermines its analogy with the "voice of reason" though in actuality it may be the only means by which to truly harmonize its parts.

In taming the appetitive, the reverence for the forms is eroticized⁸⁴ in the sense that all desire is channelled towards the forms, though without abandoning the love of the individual. Therefore “though love starts in worship and reverence, it presses on to a union closer than these can give” (Hackforth, p. 98),⁸⁵ as the lover wishes to become one with the vision of the beautiful which he sees through the beloved. This allows the “self-abandonment to the *mania* of *eros*” resulting in the transformation of the sensibility of the lover (Warner, “Appropriating the *Phaedrus*”, p. 13), through his relation with the beloved. What the lover experiences is a mixture of awe⁸⁶ and respect coupled with an intense desire for the beautiful which causes the lover simultaneously to desire the beloved and aspire to transcend this desire to a higher level of unity with beauty. Thus in contrast to the position of Ficino who concentrates on the love of the universal forms and Nussbaum who focuses on the particular individual, the *Phaedrus* seems to suggest a third view giving voice to both. The *Phaedrus* seems to describe an oscillation between

⁸⁴ Hackforth (p. 98) notes that “the shuddering awe which the holiness of beauty inspires, though erotic, contains elements of religious feeling. This goes so far as to almost [identify] the erotic with the religious impulse, not passionless self-suppression but a passionate self-surrender which is a profound satisfying of the self”.

⁸⁵ The accent which Hackforth gives Plato here, suggests that at moments he reads him through or at least is influenced by Plotinus.

⁸⁶ “Awe” means “great wonder” indicating that love precedes understanding. “Whenever they see some likeness of the things in that other world, they are struck with amazement and lose their self-possession, though they know not what this condition means, because the perception is not sufficiently clear.” *Phaedrus* 249B (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 82) The beloved experiences love before understanding, shown through the fact that the beloved does not know what he loves: “So he loves, yet knows not what he loves; he does not understand, he cannot tell what has come upon him” (*Phaedrus* 255b-e; also 253a5). This incomprehension and sense of mystery is explained by Ficino in *Plato on Love* when he says the lover “does not desire the body but. . . he is amazed by the splendour of the celestial majesty shining through the bodies. For this reason lovers do not know what they desire or seek, for they do not know God Himself whose secret flavor infuses a certain very sweet perfume of Himself into His works” (Ficino, 2:6). Though in his commentary he clearly conflates Plato’s form of the beautiful with the Judaeo-Christian God (see Watson, pp. 24-5), Ficino addressing *Phaedrus* 255b-e understands that for the lover, which is the beloved in the *Phaedrus* (Ficino reverses the reaction of lover and beloved, substituting the *erastes* for the *eromenos*), knowledge of the beautiful is limited, he does not know what he loves, due to the limitation of his memory (*Phaedrus* 255; *Republic*. 621a-b), and the physical limitation deriving from the contamination of the intellect by the desires of the body. (*Symposium* 254b, 256c; these passages refer to homosexual love and express the inferiority of a full sexual relation as opposed to one built on self-control and the channeling of powerful desires to intellectual ends, which Freud defines as the source of all cultural achievement. See Freud, “Debasement in the Sphere of Love,” p. 190; also *Civilization and our Discontent*) He cannot fully know or recognize the form (*Republic* 517b). Hence with his vision obscured, through *anamnesis* initiated by the shock of the vision of beauty he becomes aware of the beautiful itself, after which he gains understanding.

universal and particular beauty (showing *eros* as a *daimon*),⁸⁷ in which the particularity of the beloved is essential and necessary though remaining of less importance than universal beauty from which he is imbued with its beauty.

The liberation of the intellect from the spirited and appetitive elements is shown more directly through the mutual exchange and interaction between the *erastes* and *eromenos*. After the charioteer has tamed the dark horse so that he shares his awe towards the *eromenos*, the charioteer tries to maintain a state of *sophrosune*. This reverence pushes him to serve the *eromenos*, as the *erastes* “is no pretender but loves in all sincerity” (*Phaedrus* 255a2), so that with time the *eromenos* is “filled with amazement, for he perceives that all his other friends and kinsmen have nothing to offer in comparison with this friend in whom dwells a god” (*Phaedrus* 255b6-8). This marks a shift or moment of reversal. Having received so much good from the *erastes*, the *eromenos* recognizes that the *erastes* is a source of good beyond others, that in him dwells a god meaning that the form of beauty shines through him, though this beauty reached the *erastes* through the *eromenos*, as we shall now see. This recognition causes the *eromenos* to begin to favour the *erastes*, thus initiating a shift, as noted by Alcibiades (*Symposium* 222b), the *eromenos* becomes *erastes* and the *erastes*, *eromenos*.

This shift is tracked through the flow of passion following a dialectical pattern.

“That flowing stream”⁸⁸ which Zeus, as the lover of Ganymede, called the ‘flood of passion’,⁸⁹ pours in

⁸⁷ The conception of *eros* as *daimon* or god remains debatable in the *Phaedrus*. “I see no need to excuse Socrates for calling *Eros* a god here and a *daimon* in *Symposium*” (Hackforth, pp. 54f.). “There it suited his purpose to make Love an intermediate and intermediary, and he adapted popular mythology accordingly; here he can accept it unaltered. Such playing with the myths was a common literary device, freely employed by the speakers in *Symposium*” (Guthrie, p. 401). However, regardless of Socrates’ declaration that *Eros* is a god, the actual configuration of *eros* suggests that he is a *daimon*, indicating an aspect of cohesion with the *Symposium*.

Plato’s new vision of seduction is explained to us as not only involving a pursuit of the form of the beautiful but likewise the constant interaction of individuals on multiple levels. “They grasp the good and the true not by transcending erotic madness, but inside a passionate life” (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 220). Only in a relation of passionate love can individuals regrow their wings which carry them through understanding to the form of the beautiful, or in the terms of the *Republic*, the form of the good, the source of the intellectual world, (*Republic* 517b-c).

⁸⁸ The Ganymede story has two variants. In the Homeric version which has “no explicitly erotic overtones” (Barker, 2003), Ganymede was carried off by Zeus to be his wine pourer because of his beauty. With regard to the myth of the soul as charioteer with two horses, Ganymede’s father Tros was recompensed by Zeus with the gift of “marvellous horses” *Iliad* 20.232-5, 5.265-7. (See Rowe) This can be interpreted symbolically as Zeus taking the intellect of Ganymede, the charioteer, leaving behind the two horses, the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul. However, the two horses left behind were “marvelous”. As,

upon the lover. And part of it is absorbed within him, but when he can contain no more the rest flows away outside him, and as a breath of wind or an echo, rebounding from a smooth hard surface, goes back to its place of origin, even so the stream of beauty turns back and reenters the eyes of the fair beloved. And so by the natural channel it reaches his soul and gives it fresh vigour, watering the roots of the wings and quickening their growth, whereby the soul of the beloved, in its turn, is filled with love.” (*Phaedrus* 255c-d)

That the flood of passion streams down upon and into the lover⁹⁰ suggests that this is inspired love, referring back to the description of the fourth type of madness identified

according to the myth, humans have one good and one bad horse and divine beings have two good horses (*Phaedrus* 247), this implies that Ganymede is no longer human, fulfilling the myth. However, as we mentioned in note 64, the *Laws* 636d recount how the Ganymede tale was used as a justification for homosexual pleasure. The earliest surviving appearance of this variant is found in “Euripides’ *Orestes* 1392, but according to a scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* III. 114 (where it appears again), it goes back to the sixth-century lyric poet Ibycus. He was famous especially for his meltingly gorgeous love-poetry, and it seems... probable that it was Ibycus who made Zeus call the stream of love ‘*himeros*’, and that he did so in the poem alluded to by the scholiast. Given the general character of Ibycus’ best-known work (Cicero, *Tusc.* 4: 71 says that Ibycus, most of all poets, was ‘afame with love’, *flagrasse amore*), Plato would clearly be intensifying the erotic tone of this passage by alluding to an Ibycan motif....That [Plato] knew some of his love-poetry is confirmed by the reference at *Parmenides* 137a to the poem printed in Campbell’s *Greek Lyric* vol. 3 as no. 287... *Himeros* is a very plausibly Ibycan word....Campbell’s no. 286... itself uses erotic imagery not unlike Plato’s (rushing wind, lightening flashes, madness)” (Barker, 2003). Through his allusion to both variants together, Plato may be ultimately suggesting that Socrates’ attraction to Phaedrus while physically based is spiritual, showing how the erotic nature if properly channelled to the intellect acts as the means by which the individual ascends towards the forms and the divine.

⁸⁹Rowe translates this as “desire” the Greek word being *himeros*, recalling the name of the town from whence the poet who is telling this story comes (244a; see also Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 211).

⁹⁰Nussbaum interprets the effect of falling in love, the effect of the vision of the beloved on the lover, as the melting of all hardness into liquid. This not only causes unity in the lover and the vision of the beautiful entering him from the beloved but it allows a kind of contact with the beloved which inspires the lover; imitating the sexual language of *Phaedrus* 255d, she writes, “Instead of being like a dry beam of light looking upon dry light, he receives a mysterious substance that begins by being light, but transforms itself into liquid...Receiving the other person’s soul, allowing to melt the hard impassive parts of him, he feels the sudden release of pent up liquid within him, which makes him another flowing liquid light. In the ‘flowing’ of his desire he resembles a person with ‘streaming’ eyes (255D). So transformed, he begins to have access to insights that are not available within the dry life of the non-lover (cf. 239C8). He would not have had them if he had remained ‘very similar’ to the form.” (*Fragility*, pp. 216-7) Although passionate and insightful in her reading of the *Phaedrus*, I find Nussbaum’s reading of the middle dialogues to be slanted in order to support her argument about the *Phaedrus*. Nussbaum incorrectly equates the dry life of the non-lover with the initiate seeking the form of the beautiful in the *Symposium*. Clearly this initiate does to some extent have a dry life but his life is none the less that of a lover. Although this non-physical but sensual liquid unity achieved between the lover and beloved is not present in this way in the middle dialogues, the initiate desires the beautiful above all else and the beautiful exerts a passionate drawing power upon the lover through instances of beauty, as noted by Watson (p. 24), which dilutes Nussbaum’s extreme view of the opposition between the middle and late dialogues by which she virtually formulates another dualism. Although Nussbaum’s reading has a great deal of appeal, I am not convinced that it is supported by the texts.

earlier in Socrates' second speech.⁹¹ As in this context, passionate love comes from the gods and indicates possession by the god *Eros*, this explains how the lover is distinguished from others as "in him dwells a god" (*Symposium* 255b). This *mania* however is governed by the intellect, indicating its inconnection with *sophrosune* (in contrast to the conception of *eros* in Lysias' and Socrates' first speech and here Nussbaum's reading of *eros* as irrational *mania*),⁹² shown through the keeping in check of the dark horse.⁹³ In the case of the followers of Zeus, Zeus who is the god of the philosophers (252e1-2) as he is the god of order,⁹⁴ this flood is channelled in such a way

⁹¹ "When he that loves beauty is touched by such madness he is called a lover. Such a one as soon as he beholds the beauty of this world, is reminded of true beauty, and his wings begin to grow." (*Phaedrus* 249d-e)

⁹² Hackforth (p. 98) distinguishes two levels of madness. At the first level, love induces both pleasure and pain. Healing of spiritual pain and sickness demonstrates that "general principle that any satisfaction involves previous dissatisfaction." Thus "before full satisfaction is attained there is a stage of acute distress mixed with joy, and by reason of this tension the lover is maddened and distraught" (*Phaedrus* 251D). "Those who have been trapped by love alternatively sigh and rejoice. They sigh because they are losing themselves, because they are destroying themselves, because they are ruining themselves. They rejoice because they are transforming themselves into something better" (Ficino, 2:6). Similar to the myth of the birth of *eros* in the *Symposium* (203b), the first level of erotic madness is mixed, poverty and abundance, yet like Plotinus' view of *eros* as an emotion, Ficino describes the love of the *Phaedrus* as a psychological state of the lover experiencing joy and longing yet through this process being transformed by love into something better, which Hackforth picks up with regard to Socrates' self-consciousness concerning his own state of possession. (*Phaedrus* 241e, Hackforth, p. 47)

The second level of madness is transcendental. "We must, however, not identify this transitional stage with the 'divine madness' with which love in general has been unified; the madness of our present passage leaves the lover when full spiritual union with the beloved is achieved" (Hackforth, p. 98). According to Hackforth, *eros* transcends or goes beyond reason and therefore the power of *logos* to reach an ineffable truth. (Cobb (p. 149) points out that Hackforth's statement assumes that the second speech is based on the same definition of *eros* as his first speech.) Rowe (p. 169) maintains that the only common denominator in the four types of madness is that they are of divine origin, but Cobb comments that such a position would be "compatible with claiming that it is not madness in the sense of a condition that violates or transcends the limits of rationality" (p. 149). For Hackforth beauty is beyond being, a thesis we considered with regard to the *Symposium*. This is further suggested in that the satisfaction of the first madness marks the beginning of the true madness, recalling Markus' analysis of the changes in love from needing to giving in the *Symposium* (Markus, "The Dialectic of *Eros*", p. 138). Unlike Hackforth who is working "vertically", Rowe's position is far more "horizontal" as he suggests that Plato is comparing love to the other forms of madness (Rowe, p. 185). Developing a different perspective, Griswold believes that "erotic madness is not so much sent from the gods external to the individual as sparked from a source within him, as is suggested by its association with *anamnesis* [recollection]" (*Self-Knowledge*, 75), and therefore remains within the framework of rationality. Here as in the *Symposium*, the question of whether this is so seems unanswerable.

⁹³ According to A. E. Taylor (p. 309), though much less clearly in Plato's own text, this struggle is intensified when the beloved returns the love of the lover. "The time of really fierce temptation comes when the passion which was one-sided is reciprocated on the other."

⁹⁴ Rowe states that "controlling the dark horse is necessary for the wings to grow", which explains why Plato believes philosophers necessarily are only those who have this control, the followers of Zeus, as possessing *sophrosune* enables them to grow wings and therefore experience this superior type of love, a transcending of the more earth-bound erotic relation.

as to become a philosophical love which Socrates considers to be the highest type.⁹⁵

This flood of passion which Socrates now calls a “stream of beauty”, thus equating love with beauty coming from the image of beauty impressed upon the beloved’s form, returns to the beloved entering in to him by his eyes, the eyes being the most sensitive and receptive part⁹⁶ of the body.⁹⁷ Passionate desire softens “the roots of the wings”⁹⁸ and “quickens [the wings] to growth” so that the beloved filling with love and beauty is likewise able to ascend, the wings referring simultaneously to the emotional lightness which love produces and the ascent to truth, which is the process of understanding.

Now possessed, the *erastes* brimming with inspired love seeks to pour it back into the beloved through moulding him into the likeness of the god they share.⁹⁹ Plato uses the

⁹⁵Unlike Nussbaum (*Fragility*, p. 212), Hackforth is of the opinion “that a man may be a true lover. . . without being a philosopher” (Hackforth, p. 101). However, followers of Zeus, as distinct from followers of Ares, Hera or Apollo, are superior as, according to Rowe, Zeus represents order and therefore his followers are orderly, “able to control their responses to the burden of ‘the feathery one,’ *Eros*, and passionate love (Rowe, p. 186). Hackforth’s correlation of the love, philosophy and inspired *mania* is taken up by Rutherford who writes that “Love, poetic madness and philosophy are united—indeed, they are almost assimilated to one another” (Rutherford, *The Art of Plato*, p. 260) as is the philosopher and the lover. As Nussbaum beautifully states, “If these characters can bear to experience passion as they do, it is in part because they dare to think and argue as they do. . . If on the other hand, they speak philosophically as they do, it is, too, because they are here lying beside one another as they are, on this grass beside the river, willing to go mad; and this madness leads them to a new view of the philosophical truth. . . Their entire lives become ways of searching for wisdom; and part of their argument for the new view of madness comes from within their lives.” (*Fragility*, pp. 211-12)

⁹⁶Aristotle via Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Q. 78, art.1-2, The “eyes being the most intellectual of the senses.”

⁹⁷ Cf. *Symposium* (206c-d) where love is to bring forth in beauty as beauty enables procreation which leads to immortality and contemplation of the good. This inner beauty according to the *Symposium* is the beauty of the soul which is virtue (*Symposium* 209a) leading to understanding, which again shows the participation of desire in understanding.

⁹⁸The image of the wings expresses this love relation. Feathers are referred to in multiple ways concerning love. Rowe says, followers of Zeus are “able to control their responses to the burden of ‘the feathery one’ (literally, ‘the one who takes his name from his feathers/wings’)” (Rowe, p. 186). Referring to Cupid, this juxtaposes the lightness of his wings to his burden, the lightness and heaviness of love. Cupid “lends to Psyche the wings that will carry her” to Mount Olympus (Cornford, “The Doctrine of *Eros*”, p. 123). The nature of wings “consists in their power to raise heavy things aloft to the region where the gods dwell; there is no bodily part more closely akin to the divine; and the divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness’ (246D) (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 80). Note also the “tickling” at the growing of the wings of the lover and beloved (*Phaedrus* 251D-E), and the phrase “setting aflutter” to describe the lover’s reaction to the beloved (Rowe p. 188). This reminds us of Aristophanes being tickled with a feather to stop his hiccups so that he could begin his speech in the *Symposium* (189A), as the tickling of a feather, symbol of *eros*, heals (reminding us that Aristophanes’ speech followed that of Eryximachus, discussing how love heals the body, *Symposium* 186D), eliciting a speech on love (*Symposium* 210A).

⁹⁹ “The lover’s task of moulding the beloved into the likeness of their common god requires the discovery by the lover within himself of traces of that god’s nature; for although these traces are within him *ex hypothesi* (because his soul has followed the god discarnate) yet he might be blind to them, were it not that

term “Bacchant” to describe the lover. According to Rowe (p. 186), “when Bacchants are possessed they draw milk and honey from rivers”, thus the lover/Bacchant, in his passionate possession draws forth the nectar of the gods from Zeus making him godlike, while pouring into or bathing the beloved in his love which symbolically represents his spiritual richness, his love and inner beauty symbolized by milk and honey, thereby infecting the beloved with madness.¹⁰⁰ Thus “the divine grace bestowed upon the lover is poured by him in turn into the soul of the beloved so the latter too becomes assimilated to their common deity” (Hackforth, p. 102). This very act of the lover’s seduction of the beloved represents the education of the beloved, the moulding of the beloved into the god’s as well as the lover’s image.¹⁰¹

Without realizing, the lover acts as a mirror for the beloved.

“He cannot account for it, not realizing that his lover is as it were a *mirror* in which he beholds himself. And when the other is beside him, he shares his respite from anguish; when he is absent, he likewise shares his longing and being longed for, since he possesses that *counter-love* which is the image of love.” (*Phaedrus*, 255d4-e1; my emphasis).

Hackforth opposes *eros* with the term *anteros* as possessing counter-love which is the *eidolon* or reflection of love.¹⁰² As the beauty of the beloved inspires love, the reflection of beauty is love, so beauty seems to be transformed into love at the entrance of beauty

he is constrained by the very fact of ‘possession’ to keep his gaze fixed upon the god (253A2)” (Hackforth, p. 101). This process involves two types of “possession”, which seem to occur simultaneously; possession by the lover and by the god.

¹⁰⁰ “They are both mutually active and mutually receptive: from the one the other, like a Bacchant, draws in the transforming liquid; and pours liquid back, in his turn, into the beloved soul (253A). Plato describes their passionate longing and emotion for one another in a way that stirs us (and Phaedrus) with its beauty and strongly indicates that he find their madness beautiful and good. . . In this speech *eros* is not just a daimon, but a god; a thing of intrinsic value and beauty, not just a way-station towards the good. The best human life involves ongoing devotion to another individual.” (Nussbaum, *Fragility*, p. 219)

¹⁰¹ In imitating their god, Plato uses the phrase, “reaching out after him in memory’ (253A2). . . Plato seems here to come very near to identifying remembrance of the Forms with remembrance of the gods who led the procession of souls; and it would seem that the two memories correspond respectively to the metaphysical and religious aspects of philosophy; though not strictly identical, the two are inseparable, and the words of 249c imply that the memory of the forms is the more ultimate of the two” (Hackforth, p. 102).

¹⁰² According to Rowe, the “stream of beauty which, as we have been told earlier (251C-D), enters into the soul of the lover and initiates the process of regrowing its wings, is not all used up in this way; some of it is drawn back ‘like a wind or an echo’ into the eyes, and through the eyes into the soul of the beloved and does the same for him; thus a counter-love is born, whose nature is not apparent to the possessor, because he does not realize that his lover has become a mirror in which his own beauty is reflected.” (Hackforth, p.108)

into the lover's soul. The lover's love results in a counter-love which causes a mirroring of the beloved's love,¹⁰³ a counter-love which is repeated indicating a continuing cycle of reflection and transferral of passion, the love and counter-love of the other, each acting as the complement/*symbolon* of the other,¹⁰⁴ further justifying the uses of the terms "flood" and "flow" which imply liquid, a continued movement.

As the lover acts as a mirror for the beloved, which in turn allows the lover to learn through a counter reflection,¹⁰⁵ their relation promotes mutual growth towards beauty and wisdom.¹⁰⁶ As each acts as the student and teacher, this interchange results in the dialectical structure through producing a deepening of *eros* and understanding. This suggests that the apparently revealed truth of Socrates' second speech¹⁰⁷ is a dialectical ascent in which the paths of *eromenos* and *erastes* are interwoven in their love, resulting

¹⁰³ Commentators dispute as to whether the beloved reciprocates because he sees his own image, his own beauty in the other's eyes or because he partakes in the lover's *eros*. Hackforth states that the "account of 'counter-love' is based on the principle that the sublimated love of the [beloved], no less than that of the [lover], must originate in the sight of physical beauty, and on the complementary fact that the physical beauty resides wholly in the person of the beloved" (Hackforth, p. 108). For Rowe, "on Socrates' new account, the boy's feelings are similar to the lover's (though weaker, E3: the desire has further to travel?) and are directed towards the same object, i.e. his own beauty; he too, then, can be said to be in love" (Rowe, p. 188). This question is unresolved. Plato seems to leave a certain amount of vagueness in this area. Loving one's own reflection of physical beauty would indicate the loving of a physical instantiation of true beauty, which can lead to philosophical reflection of true beauty. Likewise, loving the inner beauty revealed through the love of the lover would indicate a preference for virtue which would also lead towards philosophical contemplation of the beautiful and the good.

¹⁰⁴ According to Markus' (p. 135) analysis of the speech of Aristophanes, "Love is identified with this desire for completion; its object, which may be otherwise unknown, is defined by being the 'complement' (*symbolon* is the word Plato puts in Aristophanes' mouth, 191D) of the lover's need." Thus love and counter-love act as complements, each a *symbolon* to the other.

¹⁰⁵ Though the lover desires the beloved, giving the impression that the latter is superior (*Symposium* 200e), the lover though not possessing physical beauty is initially higher than the beloved. The lover, through absorbing the beloved's beauty and reflecting it back upon the beloved in the form of virtue, acts as a mirror in order that the beloved might likewise see through his love and beauty the form of the beautiful shining within. Also, the lover acts as a transformer in that he takes in exterior beauty and internalizes it, giving forth virtue which is the beauty of soul, a higher form of beauty. The lover actually expresses and makes active the inner beauty and goodness whereas in these terms the beloved is purely potential and beautiful in an external way. It is only in the beloved's loving back, thereby reversing his role, that he becomes truly and deeply beautiful, whereas the lover, though inspired by physical beauty, is more beautiful as he has made what is outside inner and in his abundance has poured this inner beauty to another.

¹⁰⁶ Nussbaum interprets this as applying directly to the relationship of Phaedrus and Socrates. Though it can be argued that Phaedrus may not have developed in the line that she wishes to suggest, her interpretation is illuminating in illustrating precisely the *erastes/eromenos* relation which Plato is formulating. See *Fragility*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁷ Both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* describe revelations which involve an evocation of or reference to the Eleusian mysteries. Cf. *Symposium* 210-211 and Cornford, *Sapientiae*, 86-7 with *Phaedrus* 250d, 251a and *Sapientiae* p. 95.

in and motivated by the pursuit of the truth,¹⁰⁸ showing interpersonal *eros* to be indispensable to yet governed by the pursuit of the truth.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, in contrast to Nussbaum's understanding of a radical recantation of past views, the *Phaedrus* is actually a gradual progression towards the revelation of the "truth." This process begins with a utilitarian relationship exemplified in Lysias' speech in which the *eromenos* is advised to give himself to the non-*erastes* almost as an act of prostitution, an example of sheer appetitive desire which epitomizes earthly *eros*. In Socrates' first speech though *eros* is still conceived of as appetitive and the lover dangerous, the speaker, a lover disguised as a "non-lover", expresses concern for the beloved therefore showing selfless love, in that he seeks his beloved's good. The speaker thereby embodies the inner strife between earthly and heavenly *eros* acting as a mid-point in this progression. Following the recantation, the truth or kernel of this progression emerges: *eros* is redefined as man's greatest good and shown to be the element which following man's fall to earth initiates his ascent and return to the realm of the gods enabling him once more to contemplate the forms of the spiritual realm. Thus this sequence of speeches describes the gradual unfolding and opening of the soul emerging or turning from matter/the material world through the love of an individual towards virtue and the forms which ultimately govern that relationship with the individual. In this way the sequence of the speeches can be seen as an ironic unveiling of the true nature of *eros*, a turning from the most callous and inhuman notion of *eros* to a virtuous, generous, deeply human and inspired love. This voyage of the soul may well indicate what Plato actually thought.¹¹⁰ Yet a substantial problem is present within the dialogue which disrupts this sequential unveiling: the recantation formulating an *aporia* which not only is a "lack of way" or "poverty" of meaning but causes the evacuation of meaning.

¹⁰⁸ "The inspiration of love opens a potential path but does not ensure that it will be followed; still less does it do the travelling... We learn that like other kinds of inspired lovers, they will be encouraged in their own development by their concern to educate the beloved and bring out the character that they sense he shares with them (252e-243c)... The philosophic couple, who never consummate their sexual desire, live a life 'together in mind' (*homonoeitikon*, 256b1), but a mind set on their remaining always in control of themselves and on regaining their wings for the sake of the good that awaits in the afterlife (the vision of the Forms) rather than for the sake of love (256b)." (Ferrari, "Platonic Love", p. 267)

¹⁰⁹ Rutherford, p. 257.

¹¹⁰ Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 126.

F. IMPOSITION OF *APORLAI*

In order to understand this problem, we must turn back to our initial analysis of the recantation. In Socrates' first speech, as *sophrosune* is good and *mania* is evil Socrates claims that love is evil. Having covered his head for his first speech, he then recants stating that love as *mania* is the highest good, uncovering his head to unveil the truth. By recanting and unveiling his head Socrates implies that this first position is a lie, thus pointing to and reinforcing the integration of *sophrosune* and *mania* in love because in order for love to be good it must be self-controlled. The implication therein is that Socrates' second speech represents the truth.

Hackforth's reading of Socrates' second speech as the unveiling of truth is reinforced by its economic centrality and his use of myth and "poetic" language. First, by means of the economy and layout of the dialogue, through "size and grandeur", Plato "attaches an importance to the second speech of Socrates and . . . [uses] the other two speeches by way of foils or contrasts thereto. . . [within] the total economy of the dialogue" (Hackforth, p. 136),¹¹¹ suggesting Socrates' second speech as being the "central mystery"¹¹² of the dialogue, perhaps suggesting that Socrates' second speech is actually Plato's position. The use of myth and "poetic" language here as elsewhere seems to be "designed to convey truth or something close to it however indirectly or to nudge readers in a truth-oriented direction" (Barker, 2002). According to Rutherford (pp. 258-9), this speech is

referred to by its author as a "mythical hymn" (265c1); it provides a means of describing the truly real world to which the human soul naturally belongs and to which it always longs to return. This is not dialectically demonstrable vision, and so it is appropriate that it should be couched in mythical form, and that the idea of poetic inspiration should be used—poetry, elsewhere treated as the enemy of philosophy, is here employed in its service. It is admitted, not only in the later passage which plays down the significance of speech, but within the speech itself, that this is an approximation, an imperfect account, not a statement of absolute truths: "To say what kind of thing the soul is would require a long exposition, and one calling

¹¹¹Not only does this discount Arieti's position in *Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Dramas* in his chapter on the *Phaedrus*, as interpreted by Cobb (p. 140), that this dialogue is a discussion of rhetoric in which *eros* has no positive significance, but it also demonstrates the importance of the second speech of Socrates' praising love, to which the first two act as a foil or highlight by contrast.

¹¹²Ficino, *On Love*, VII, 13-15.

for utterly superhuman powers; but to say what it is like requires a shorter one, and within human capacity. So let us speak in the latter way” (246a). “And as for the realm above the heavens, there is no poet who has ever yet hymned it as it deserves, not will there ever be. But it is like this” (247c).

This seems to support Ficino’s understanding that Socrates’ second speech represents this central mystery as being beyond language, a position held both by Hackforth and A. E. Taylor. Then “just as imagery, playfulness, poetic allusions etc. are useful in enticing a person for the first time into argumentative philosophical thought,¹¹³ so these myths work, at a higher level, to draw us towards modes of thought which give access to absolute truth—but which (perhaps) cannot be recreated for us in someone else’s words, certainly not written words” (Barker 2002).

Further emphasis is placed on Socrates’ second speech as the bearer of truth by the fact that Socrates is presented through his discussion of madness as the exemplification of a *daimon*, the intermediary between mortals and immortals, attributing a positive truth value to Socrates’ second speech, as previously discussed. Though Socrates puts his speech in the mouth of the poet from Himera which appears to distance him from its contents, as he puts it in the mouth of a poet who according to *Ion* (535b, 534c) being divinely inspired reveals the truth (Cornford *Sapientiae*, p. 79), this further increases the credibility of Socrates’ second speech as expressing in some way Plato’s position.

However as we discussed in Chapter V, “Recantation”, Socrates’ recantation must be read in the light of Stesichorus’ recantation which he cites. As Stesichorus recanted that which may well have been true, or partly true, that Helen went to Troy, for a tale that she did not “sail in well-decked ships”, this suggests that Socrates in recanting his first speech may also be recanting what is true in favor of his second speech which given this reversal is by implication not true. Thus given the progression of the dialogue without taking into account Stesichorus, Socrates first speech is false while his second speech is

¹¹³ Friedlander (p. 226) expresses uncertainty as to whether to take Socrates’ recantation seriously specifically due to his playfulness and irony. “Socrates is very ironic and playful in his approach to his second speech... His flattery of Phaedrus at 242b seems a bit hyperbolic. He claims that he is a prophet at 242c, which, even if the claim is ironic, contrasts with his attitude of humility before the prophetess Diotima in *Symposium* (206b). Moreover, such irony seems a bit cavalier on the part of one who is already in serious trouble with an important god, if we are to believe that his claims about needing to expiate his sin are serious” (Cobb, p. 147). Socrates’ playfulness and irony act as the means by which Socrates lures others into philosophical discussions.

true. However in the light of the complexities involved in Stesichorus' recantation, Socrates recanting through citing Stesichorus suggests the possibility that Socrates' first speech may be true while Socrates' second speech may be untrue. This, as we discussed, is a recantation within a recantation which forms an aporetic structure.

As a consequence of its placement between Socrates' first and second speeches the aporetic structure of the recantation undermines the speeches and therefore exposes weaknesses in both Nussbaum's and Hackforth's readings of the *Phaedrus*. Through undermining the value of Socrates' second speech, the *aporia* brings into question Hackforth's view of the ironic unveiling of Socrates' second speech as the "central mystery" of the dialogue. Likewise the *aporia* also further undermines Nussbaum's reading of the recantation as a sincere repenting of Plato's views in the middle dialogues due to his philosophical reevaluation of the role of the individual, mainly due to his relationship with Dion. In Nussbaum, the "truth" content of Socrates' second speech is put in question, which draws into question Plato's position and consequently whether Plato changed. Though Hackforth's reading is closer to the *Phaedrus* than Nussbaum's interpretation, he does not seem to acknowledge the *aporia* as is shown by his low valuation or trivialization of the recantation seen only as a dramatic tool.¹¹⁴ Though this is a possible and initially coherent view, nonetheless it seems to be undermined through the presence of this *aporia*. Though generally much farther away from the text than Hackforth, Nussbaum puts strong emphasis on the recantation, however she does not go far enough. Though she sees the recantation as an *aporia* and turns "This story isn't true" against Socrates' second speech and the dialogue, she seems to employ the aporetic nature of the recantation as a means of avoiding drawing any conclusions. Though moving in the right direction initially, she does not recognize the full implications of the *aporia* as the potential recantation of a recantation. For this reason the *aporia* ultimately undermines her reading as she does not seek to explain, given Plato's new view of *eros*, why the recantation is designed in such a way as to be aporetic. Thus both Hackforth and Nussbaum's reading of the value of Socrates' second speech and the recantation, though

¹¹⁴ Hackforth (p. 111) thinks "there was no real change of attitude on Socrates' part" after his recantation of the conception of love presented in his first speech. Hackforth believes that the purpose of the "recantation is to encourage Phaedrus to recant."

raising essential and valid points of their interpretations of the *Phaedrus* which are at least partially present in the text, are undermined by this *aporia*.

Thus this potential recantation of a recantation obscures the meaning of *eros* and the dialogue as a whole. This creates a certain tension between the affirmation of Socrates' second speech as representing *eros* accurately and the simultaneous suggestion of the possibility that none of the readings of *eros* are to be taken as the "truth",¹¹⁵ thus leaving behind the question; Where does the truth lie?

G. EDUCATION THROUGH *APORIAI*

To respond to this question, we may ask: Given the centrality of the recantation, what is its purpose? This process of underlining and undermining the speeches, suggesting the various pros and cons of the two positions on *eros* expressed in Socrates' first and second speeches can continue perhaps indefinitely. Given this potentially infinite movement, why does Plato lead his readers back and forth whether through technical device, dramatic exchange, symbolism, metaphor, morality? The answer to this question lies in the dialogue's role in education.¹¹⁶ This oscillation which is clearly intentional on Plato's part, and a form of play, is a method of sublimation. Through undermining his own position, Plato prevents the student from becoming fixated upon the teacher's views and thus from becoming stuck, according to the perfectionist method¹¹⁷ to force his students to think for themselves. Through undercutting the speeches with the *aporia*, Plato forces his students and readers to think for themselves, putting their pre-conceptions into question and through this themselves and their conceptual

¹¹⁵ Furthermore, bearing in mind the proof in the *Symposium* that *eros* is a *daimon* not a god (*Symposium* 203b7-d10) and is therefore between good and evil (202b2-6), and that the recantation returns to a declaration that *Eros* is a god (as in the *Symposium*, Phaedrus' speech 178a1-2; Agathon's speech 195a8-10, b5-c1), we note a gap in the notions of *eros* allowing for slippage between Socrates' second speech and Socrates' first speech read in the light of the *Symposium*. "If we assume that the view Socrates attributes to Diotima in the *Symposium* represents Plato's own best effort at an analysis of *eros*, this 'slip' by Socrates could be seen as further support for the claim that Plato does not intend for the reader to accept any of the views of *eros* that Socrates offers in this dialogue, although it must be noted at the same time that the Greeks generally (and Socrates in particular in this dialogue) deal with stories about the divine realm in a flexible manner." (Cobb, p. 147)

¹¹⁶ The form of this dialogue, also suggested in that it is open-ended, suggests that it may have been devised as a *paignion* or "plaything" (see Rutherford, p. 243) for Plato's students, intended primarily for circulation inside the Academy.

¹¹⁷ See Cavell, Ch. 1; Warner, "Appropriating the *Phaedrus*", p. 10.

limitations/boundaries,¹¹⁸ and in this way actually convert them into philosophers. Therefore, the role of the *aporia* is not destructive in Plato, i.e. negative, to reduce others to nothing, but as a means to stimulate thought, philosophical reflection, to sublimation in the sense of purification or elevation.

This process of education incorporating an *aporia*, the potential recantation of the recantation, works simultaneously within the *Phaedrus* with the *erastes*' seduction of the *eromenos* to philosophy and in turn the author's seduction of the appropriate reader.¹¹⁹ Though Socrates is not wooing Phaedrus in the romantic sense (Kierkegaard, *Concept*, p. 189) except playfully,¹²⁰ Socrates is wooing Phaedrus to philosophy.¹²¹ On a second level

¹¹⁸ This is a device currently used by postmodernism; cf. David Robey, *Writers and Society in Contemporary Italy*, p. 77.

¹¹⁹ The notion of the fitting reader is discussed in Lyotard's analysis, in *Just Gaming*, p. 9. The classical (modern) addressee puts great importance on the appropriate. In contrast to the "casting a bottle in the waves" of postmodernity, affirming the desirability of an unknowable reception of a work by a unknown addressee, in modernism (which he calls here "classicism"), the sender and addressee have a common system of values. The sender can substitute himself for the reader and thereby can judge his accomplishment. Plato, one might say, searches for and writes for the modern addressee.

¹²⁰ The philosophical relationship of Socrates and Phaedrus is characterized by play, explicable in that play is intrinsically a part of *eros* for the individual (Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p. 92-3). At the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, "the relationship takes on a playfully erotic tone at several points" (*Phaedrus*. 229B, Cobb, p. 142). Socrates teases Phaedrus for trying to trick Socrates into believing that he does not possess the manuscript. Hackforth (p. 26) attributes Phaedrus' "hiding of the manuscripts to the custom of rhetorical teachers to encourage students to make such summaries and Phaedrus youthfully wishes to be complimented by Socrates after disclaiming his ability". Phaedrus is playing hard to get with regard to admitting that he possesses the speech, in order to "try his powers" to lure Socrates (228E) exemplifying rhetoric as the art of persuasion. This hiding of the manuscript also brings to the foreground that Phaedrus is not always entirely honest (being what he seems) showing play to occur through irony, the intentional confusing of essence and existence. Further, Phaedrus taunts, provokes and teases Socrates, playfully mimicking him, with the same words Socrates used on him saying "don't I know my Socrates? If not, I've forgotten my own identity. He wanted to speak, but made difficulties about it" (236C), likewise playing with identity, seductively confusing essence and existence, unity and difference. Furthermore, the transition between Lysias' and Socrates' first speeches employs words implying "play" in abundance. See 229c, 265c, 276c-d, 278b. emphasizing the relation of play and language in seduction. Thus Cobb (p. 145) plausibly suggests that "being playful may be part of being serious" within the dialogues.

¹²¹ Socrates and Phaedrus seem to know each other well enough to predict each other's actions and responses and can thereby because of this familiarity tease each other (28a,b,c9), bringing to mind Nussbaum's comment that truth in the *Phaedrus* involves "subjective knowledge of the individual beloved, their responses, habits and limit." Phaedrus is an appropriate soul as he is always "eager for a dialogue on love" being here "the author of our discussion" (177D) (Hackforth, p. 26), and in the *Symposium* initiating speeches on love. He seeks an appropriate soul as is shown when Phaedrus says, this is "appropriate for you to hear" (227c3), Socrates having claimed in the *Symposium*, to be an expert only in matters concerning *eros* (177d) (Rowe, p. 136). Thus this is "the association of two kindred souls".

However, which soul is fitting is not always obvious and can only be discerned through interaction with the potential beloved and the choice the beloved makes faced with philosophical discourse. Thus the beloved's appropriateness is discovered only in response to the lover's efforts to attract and seduce him. Appropriateness is determined in this case in retrospect, depending upon the level of success of the relationship (whereas the seduction is only the beginning of a relationship).

however, Plato through Platonic irony (Griswold, "Irony", p. 100) simultaneously is wooing the reader of the *Phaedrus*, and hence ourselves, to philosophy, seeking in effect to guide the reader "into leading reflective and possibly philosophical lives".

With regard to Griswold's conception of Platonic irony, Platonic anonymity is essential in order that each element in the dialogue serves to convey Plato's overall message which in the *Phaedrus* as in others is the purpose of leading the reader to philosophical reflection. Taking this into account, to assume with Warner that Plato is seeking an "appropriate reader" ("Appropriating the *Phaedrus*" p. 11) through the text seems to conflict with Socrates' critique of writing. Socrates criticizes writing in that although it appears to be alive if you ask it something "[it points] to... the same thing each time... and it does not know how to address those it should address and not those it should not" (275e1-4; trans. Rowe). Thus in Phaedrus' words, unlike "the living and animate speech of the man who knows,... written speech would rightly be called a kind of phantom" (276a8-10; trans. Rowe). Thus writing is seen as a phantom/dead as opposed to living speech. For Warner although readers often take Plato's critique of writing literally, Plato's critique of writing appears a gesture of irony,¹²² in that through the *Phaedrus*, Plato is actually sifting readers in order to find the appropriate reader to whom it can fully disclose its message. Readers who are drawn in and seduced into abandoning rhetoric for philosophy represent the "fitting readers"¹²³ whereas those who reject the

The end of the *Phaedrus* following Socrates' prayer is left open and indeterminate. Plato does imply at the end following Socrates' prayer that Phaedrus has been won over to Socrates, but as Cobb (p. 156) comments, a good question at the end of the *Phaedrus* is how much has Phaedrus actually changed? Has he switched his preference to Socrates because Socrates used rhetorical language and techniques which appealed to him in which case he has not changed at all because he is still obsessed with rhetoric rather than philosophy, semblance over truth? Or has Socrates managed to write something on his soul which has made him begin an ascent through his dialectical relationship with Socrates towards the truth? We do not know if Socrates was successful in seducing Phaedrus nor perhaps can we be sure whether Plato has seduced the reader. The end is left open resembling postmodern texts in their indeterminacy.

¹²² "It is indeed, a little strange that the dialogue's deflationary account of writing has so often been taken as representing the literal truth it undoubtedly designates without regard for the possibility of seeing the literal description as ironic commentary on its misleading nature as an account of a work such as that within which it is embedded." ("Appropriating the *Phaedrus*" p. 11)

¹²³ "The critique of writing invites the retort that if a work is able to discriminate between readers, and those who are fitting find in the text upon interrogation responses to their questions, so that it does not, when 'you ask it about any of the things it says out of a desire to learn' only superficially point 'to just one thing, the same each time' (275d-e), then it is not simply the illegitimate brother to speech--and may indeed play that role in the reader's self-development that it would appear that the *Phaedrus* itself has indeed itself frequently achieved." ("Appropriating the *Phaedrus*" p. 11)

conversion to philosophy show themselves, not writing, to be illegitimate brothers.¹²⁴ Supporting this reading, if Plato did not believe that the written words convey life he would, it seems plausible to suppose, hardly have written his numerous dialogues, which are clearly not just an “elixir of memory” (274e5-6; trans. Rowe) for “[laying] up a store of reminders... for himself, when he reaches a forgetful old age” (276d2-4; trans. Rowe).¹²⁵ On this reading, the function of the *Phaedrus*, as we have seen through the Socrates of the *Phaedrus*’ use of the *aporia*, would be to form a dialectical relation with the readers, echoing the dialectical structure within the dialogue, to teach the reader to become philosophical.¹²⁶

Griswold seems closer to the text in that he simultaneously affirms both writing and Socrates’ critique of writing in view of philosophical reflection.

By written dialogues which present themselves as spoken exchanges and which do not explicitly call attention to their status as written texts, Plato appears to be affirming without qualification the Socratic praise of the spoken dialogue. This appearance is a dissemblance, for Plato did write, and his putatively spoken dialogues could exist only as written....Plato might then appear, given his deed of writing, to be endorsing without qualification the genre of the written dialogue. This endorsement is revealed as a

¹²⁴There is initially a correlation between the philosopher and speech as the true son, and the rhetorician and writing, the illegitimate son, yet Plato here manipulates this opposition showing writing not to be classed with rhetoric, but a possible means to the end of philosophy, reminding us of Pausanias’ statement in the *Symposium* that “any. . . action itself, as such, is neither good nor bad [but]. . . depends upon how it is performed” (181a). Also see Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy”.

¹²⁵ Writing is not just an “elixir of memory” “for anyone who is following the same track” (276d2-4), but is also used to sift the readers and lead the appropriate reader onto the right path.

¹²⁶ As Lyotard (*Just Gaming*, p. 6) writes, “A reader is an addressee of written messages. A reader who starts to talk is something else: someone who takes the position of a sender of new message. Even if the message is a question; even if the message awaits an answer. In this way, there is in our present game a certain reversal of roles, since I am the one who tries to listen to your questions and to speak in turn from them. Insofar as what I wrote raised questions for you, you ask questions that in turn will raise questions for me: there is a permutation, an exchange of roles in the very production of a book.” The reader of the *Phaedrus* is Plato’s addressee. The reader who answers back to the *Phaedrus* in voice or writing (as in the case of this thesis) becomes the sender. Through examining the text again Plato responds to the reader’s question. Thus in questioning the text, the reader becomes the writer who in turn becomes the reader again reproducing the internal dialectical structure of a dialogue. This change from reader to writer is a role reversal which, when repeated, shows a necessary and continuous exchange of thought which defines neither as the writer or reader but each as both reader and writer, student and teacher, and lover and beloved, in which each pulls forth the wisdom from the other suggestive of the dialectical structure of *anamnesis* echoing the internal dialectic within the dialogue. Thus Plato’s interaction with the reader produces a new dialogue/text between author and reader. Through this method, Plato by means of his philosophical dialogue not only sifts his readers but teaches them to become philosophers. Therefore, in the *Phaedrus* Plato, through the guise of Socrates, is trying to attract and seduce the reader, us, through establishing a reading dialectic with us through which he employs the *aporia* of the recantation to convert the reader to philosophy.

dissemblance when we realize that the texts are not meant as substitutes for spoken dialogue but as invitations to it. (Griswold, "Irony", pp. 94-5)

In this way by writing dialogues Plato endorses spoken dialectics. Because of the dialogues' "logographic necessity" (Griswold, "Irony", p. 84) he endorses writing. Yet given this logographic necessity in which each element is directed towards the encouragement of philosophical reflection which is through dialectic, he uses the dialogues as an invitation to or initial introduction to the end of philosophical reflection. Strengthening and clarifying this argument Griswold elsewhere points out that in the myth concerning the critique of writing by Theuth, "the sort of 'memory' which Thamus [Theuth] wishes to safeguard is precisely the *anamnesis* of Socrates' palinode" (*Self-Knowledge*, pp. 206-7). In this way, while emphasizing and affirming the *anamnesis* element in Socrates' second speech, Plato through categorizing writing as dead seemingly undermines the entire dialogue,¹²⁷ puts all the speeches into question, and encourages the reader (in the context of *anamnesis*) to weigh the conceptions of *eros*, philosophy, rhetoric and writing for himself, inviting him to think for himself.¹²⁸

H. IRONY AS *POROS*

Given that Hackforth's conception of the *Phaedrus*, which proved to be more accurate textually than Nussbaum's, proposes an ironic unveiling of the "truth" presented in Socrates' second speech, which in turn opposes the irony of the *aporia* reducing all knowledge to nothing, we note a conflict in different types of irony, similar to that discussed in Chapter IV, "Eros and Irony". In the first, reminiscent of the traditional form of irony, exemplified by Alcibiades' understanding of irony, as the opposition of essence and existence, existence is slowly unveiled to reveal the essence. Thus through the sequence of speeches, the truth of Socrates' second speech is ultimately unveiled. In the second form of irony, Socratic irony of the first type according to Griswold, as Socrates

¹²⁷Plato's critique may also allude to the fact that Lysias can not personally respond to Socrates' attack as his written speech is discussed while he is not present.

¹²⁸In this way Plato remains "faithful to Socrates' method in refusing to 'teach' his readers and leaving them to think out the matter for themselves". (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 137-9; also see Kuhn, *Fin du Phèdre de Platon*, p. 10)

while claiming to know nothing deflates the truth claims of the sophists and reduces the youths to “nothing”, so here in the *Phaedrus* the *aporia* of the recantation functions to put in doubt all truth claims. While Hackforth’s view emphasizes certain truth claims concerning the dialogue’s ironic progression and the value of Socrates’ second speech, the second type of irony undermines the first, producing an underlying *aporia*, resulting in a destabilization of any preconceived reading (with the exception of that which is derived through *anamnesis*), thereby stimulating philosophical reflection as discussed by Kierkegaard (*Concept*, p. 211).

In this context, as in other dialogues, Plato’s “speculative” thought in that it “presupposes a fullness,”¹²⁹ regardless of the work of the Socratic *aporia* of knowledge upon it, ultimately is not undermined. This resilience to the Socratic *aporia* of knowledge perhaps results from the fact that Plato’s “speculative thought”, like his understanding of divine inspiration, presupposes a heteronomous system accessible through *anamnesis*.¹³⁰ Speculative thought integrates the “nothing” of Socratic *aporia* within itself as a tool by which it enhances its further speculation, thereby making itself even more heterogeneous, using irony as an element directed towards creating rather than destruction, focused on being/“fullness” rather than nothingness. Because of speculative faith in fullness through *anamnesis*, though the *aporia* is still present, it is controlled, and therefore is unable to infect all thought with nothingness.

This purpose of philosophical reflection in the *Phaedrus*, as in many of the

¹²⁹ This fullness while indicating a belief in true virtue also points to the fullness of reason, that everything is explicable through reason exemplified by Plato’s confidence in mathematics/geometry and its connection with *anamnesis*. Fullness is a belief that humans can know, a “unity of thought and being” (Kierkegaard, *Concept*, p. 37).

¹³⁰ “The resolution of the *aporia* of knowledge is *anamnesis*” (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 49-51, 52). This opens the problem of being and beyond being which is ambiguous in the dialogues. Divine inspiration or *mania*, at least for the lover in the *Phaedrus* (254b6-7) and in terms of mathematics in the *Meno* (82a1-2 ff), appears to be through *anamnesis*. Though this has been viewed as extending beyond reason, this pursuit of wisdom is strictly, at least in terms of mathematics, through reason indicating that to which it points is within the boundaries of reason, though the human mind is generally blind to it.

For Aristotle “Platonism was, in fact, [more] Pythagoreanism modified by Socrates’ influence than Socraticism modified by Pythagoreans’ influence.” (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, p. 46; also see p. 62; Empedocles vol. II, pp. 251-3; Guthrie, “Plato the Man and his Dialogues”, p. 402) According to Cornford (p. 62), the Platonic dialogues are enveloped in the religious beliefs of Pythagoreans, “kinship of all life, divine, human, and animal – provides a scale of being along which the migrating soul may rise or sink according to its merits”.

dialogues, is inseparable from *anamnesis*¹³¹ in that it is through remembering that which is forgotten that reflection is possible (see *Theaetetus* 150). Griswold suggests that Plato's strategy of letting the individual think for himself as opposed to imposing a doctrine upon him seems

obviously connected with the notion that philosophical learning is a form of 'recollection', a kind of knowledge to be brought out by the learner 'from within'. Irony in its various guises, on both Socratic and Platonic levels, seems fairly obviously to be one way to compel the reader to rediscover on his or her own...[The Platonic dialogues have] an understanding of what it would mean to be a perfected, complete human being....an ethical point to make to the effect that the unexamined life is not worth living.... [We should understand] 'the point' of irony as connected to Plato's wish to invite the reader into a life of self-examination. (Griswold, "Irony", p. 100)

This interconnection between irony and *anamnesis* is likewise affirmed in the critique of writing by Theuth in which *anamnesis* seems to be the only means by which true wisdom can be acquired, achieved through dialectics with another, which causes the bringing forth of true virtue in oneself and/or the other, which brings us back to *Symposium* 212, though there *anamnesis* is not referred to overtly.

Given therefore that the *aporia* of the potential recantation of the recantation in the *Phaedrus* results in the undermining of other views with the exception of that which is derived through *anamnesis*, thereby stimulating reflective thought, the use of the aporetic structure of the recantation extends beyond Socratic irony. It can be seen as an example *par excellence* of Platonic irony in that its function transcends the conversation

¹³¹ The Plato of the *Meno* is far more direct in his undermining of Socratic irony. In the *Meno*, just following Meno's statement that Socrates is "a perplexed man... and reduce[s] others to perplexity" (80a1-2), to "nothing," through his Socratic irony, then comparing Socrates to the numbing effect of a sting ray (80a6-7), Meno brings up the question of the *aporia* of knowledge which is at the heart of Socratic irony, that which reduces others to perplexity. To this Socrates responds "You realize that what you are bringing up is a trick argument?" (80b1-2) an argument of the Sophists, which several lines later Socrates condemns as not a good argument. The *aporia* fails, according to Socrates, faced with what he has "heard from men and woman who understand the truths of religion" (81a4), "priests and priestesses" (81a8) also spoken of by "poets who are divinely inspired" (81b2), the immortality of the soul which he proves through *anamnesis* (82a1-2). Curiously, Socrates condemns the heart of the technique by which the actual Socrates reduced people to "nothing" and "silence," as "a trick argument" (80e2), implying that Socrates employed the tricks of the sophists to some extent, thereby radically reducing the image of the original Socrates. He stretches beyond the "trickery," sophistry, "false" knowledge with the notion of the immortality of the soul, proved through *anamnesis* exemplified by mathematical proofs, showing Plato's "Socrates" to be influenced by Pythagorean teachings (Cornford, *Sapientiae*, pp. 111-112). Here it seems Plato, student of the Pythagoreans and a mathematician himself, goes beyond the Socratic irony.

taking place within the dialogue and, as an example of logographic necessity within the dialogue, works with the other elements in order to communicate Plato's central message to the reader. This entails leading the reader to reflect philosophically to enable him to lead a "reflective, possibly philosophical [life]" (Griswold, "Irony", p. 100), thereby seeking the well-being of his soul through procreating true virtue. This in itself shows that Plato presupposed "fullness", that true virtue and understanding exist and that their attainment is possible, which is the foundation of and that towards which Platonic *eros* is directed. Furthermore this fullness is the end that Platonic and consequently Socratic irony strive to achieve; Platonic irony, subsuming Socratic irony, being the means by which Plato introduces and leads the reader along the path to true virtue. Platonic irony, pursuing the well-being of the reader's soul, demonstrates the *poros*-dominant tendency in *eros* emphasizing that part of *eros* focused not upon lack but on a pathway through lack, which is Plato's overall project. This is articulated in the *Phaedrus* through the sequential progression of different forms of irony. The unveiling irony of Hackforth is undermined by Socrates' *aporia* of the recantation, a further use of irony. This use of Socratic irony is undermined in turn by Platonic irony which provokes philosophical reflection, hence the well-being of the reader's soul through *anamnesis*. Thus we see three distinct types or phases of irony, each moving beyond the next, creating a "path" of irony, showing in the *Phaedrus* as in other dialogues the inseparability of *eros* and irony, irony being a means by which love is demonstrated.

I. CONCLUSION

Thus far in this thesis, having noted that in Platonic thought *Eros* is the child of *Penia* and *Poros*, we have identified two strands and potentialities of *eros* which can be seen as giving rise to a *penia*-dominant form of *eros* and a *poros*-dominant form. Socrates, the embodiment of Platonic *eros*, affirmed that he knows nothing. His reduction of others to an *aporia*, which is the essence and starting point of Socratic inquiry seeking virtue and wisdom, demonstrates this *penia*-dominant tendency in *eros* which focuses upon lack. While *penia* and *poros* are integral parts of *eros*, this *penia*-dominant form of *eros* serves and is subsumed under the greater ends of the *poros*-dominant form of *eros*,

the general Platonic notion of *eros*. This functions as a method or technique and phase in the process of understanding in a similar way to the manner in which Socratic irony serves the overall *telos* of Platonic irony. The *poros*-dominant tendency in *eros* focuses not upon lack but on the passage through the *aporia* of the lack of knowledge, virtue etc. This is accomplished, or at least striven for, through Socratic and Platonic irony by which Plato seeks to beget true *arete* in others, and hence the reader, through causing them to reflect for themselves. Here we see that though in Diotima's myth of the birth of *Eros* the meaning of *poros* is intellectual resourcefulness and cunning, the overall understanding of *poros* in the Platonic trajectory is "pathway" indicating the passage through the *aporia* or *penia* of knowledge, the facilitation of which Plato seems to consider a great act of selfless love as it aids the other and oneself to advance towards true understanding, virtue and perhaps immortality.

As noted in Chapter I of this Thesis, while Plotinus' understanding of *Penia* was relatively consistent with Plato's myth, his understanding of *Poros* represents a significant shift in understanding. From Plotinus onward in the Platonic tradition *Poros* may be read as "wealth, resource or possession", as for him it represents the Reason-Principle from the Intellect and ultimately from the One overflowing in reason principles and goodness, resulting in the "contemplation of immutable essences". Given this understanding of *Poros* as the abundance of goodness, beauty and truth pouring down from the One, through turning upward in contemplation of the One we receive a wealth of goodness, virtue and truth. This understanding of *poros* is connected to *poros* as pathway in that the contemplation of this wealth of reason principles and tracing them back to their source functions as a pathway through which individuals are liberated from the *aporia* of the world, causing the liberation and/or salvation of their souls depending upon the interpretative tradition. This third understanding of *Poros*, implicit in Plato at best, following Plotinus is accepted by many Neo-Platonic Christian thinkers, such as Augustine, Ambrose and Ficino. In this context, *Poros* is seen to be of divine origin, a fullness suggesting the wealth of God and his creative goodness and love pouring down into creation, clearly therefore having a non-acquisitive selfless aspect and which in conjunction with *penia*/lack lead men back to God. In this way therefore we see Plotinus' understanding of *poros* to be digestible by and providing a linguistic resource for

Christianity which, though extremely different, integrates into its tradition, as we shall shortly see with regard to Dante. Before exploring this, however, we shall turn to examine two possible means by which Platonism may have reached Dante.

PART 2
FROM PLATO TO DANTE:
TWO POSSIBLE CHAINS OF INFLUENCE

VIII. INFLUENCE THROUGH THE PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

Having examined Plato and before turning to Dante, in order to situate the choice of Dante in relation to Plato in our discussion of *eros*, we shall now examine two complementary ways by means of which the Platonic influence may have reached Dante; the philosophical and the literary. On the first account, Dante was influenced by the philosophical/theological tradition of scholars within the monastic community; one seemingly plausible chain of influence is Plato to Plotinus to Augustine and, as Augustinian teachings infiltrated most of the schools (including those holding to the Aristotelian model), eventually leading to Dante. The second account suggests that Platonism influenced Dante through the poetic tradition, perhaps through Ovid but certainly through the Neo-Platonic influence upon the Troubadours.

Dante had no direct access to Plato's dialogues on love, neither the *Symposium* nor the *Phaedrus*.¹ Conservatively Moore ("Dante and Plato" in *Dante Studies*, First Series, p. 156) states that "Dante's knowledge of the actual works of Plato was doubtless limited...to the *Timaeus*, though from passages in Aristotle, Cicero and perhaps Augustine, he was aware of some of the doctrines beyond the limits of that work". Mazzeo (*Structure and Thought*, p. 2), Gilson, and Nardi ("Dante and Medieval Culture", p. 41) extend this position, maintaining that Platonism was diffused through the culture² through philosophy, theology and literature.

With regard specifically to Dante's education, relatively little is known. As Florence had no university, "university learning was represented chiefly in the Dominican and Franciscan convents whose schools Dante tells us he attended. Among their friars were

¹ Symonds, "Dantesque and Platonic ideals of Love", p. 30; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 167.

² "It is as certain as these things can be that Dante had no direct knowledge of the *Phaedrus*. On the other hand, if sources are insisted upon, he had no need of the *Phaedrus*. To paraphrase Etienne Gilson, if, in the Middle Ages in Western Europe, Plato was virtually nowhere, Platonism was everywhere, in the fathers, in Cicero, in the Arab philosophers, and, indeed, in Aristotle." (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 2) "To the objection that the Florentine poet had no knowledge of those two works of the Athenian philosopher, we may reply that Platonic thought spread in countless rivulets and by then was inspiring a vast literature which, at least in part, was already well known to Dante." (Nardi, "Dante and Medieval Culture", p. 41) "The scattered elements of platonic doctrines of love were everywhere present awaiting a synthesis. The vocabulary awaited a man who had had a platonic experience and had the need and ability to express it. Dante, I think, was just such a man." (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 2)

men who had been to universities and who were capable of introducing him to classical and scholastic philosophy.” (Holmes, p. 18; see *Convivio* II, XII, 2-7) In *Inferno* XV Dante himself acknowledges his considerable debt to Brunetto Latini. Furthermore, after the death of Beatrice (*Convivio* II, XII, 2-7), echoing Augustine after the death of his friend (*Confessions* IV), Dante consoled himself with the pursuit of philosophy reading Cicero’s *On Friendship* and the Neo-Platonist text Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*³; thereafter he became so engrossed in philosophical studies that he calls Philosophy (*Convivio*, II, XII, 2-7)⁴ the “noble lady”⁵ with whom he has now fallen in love, a personification reminiscent of Boethius’ “Lady Philosophy” and likewise Cicero’s “exhortation of Philosophy.”⁶

1. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PLATO AND DANTE

To explore the proposed Neo-Platonic chain of influence by which Dante may have been influenced by Plato, we will point to items in the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic* which play a role in Neo-Platonism and show how they recur, somewhat modified, in the Dantean texts. With regard to the similarities between the thought of Plato and Dante, the general resemblance may be broken down into three areas; cultural,⁷

³ “The ‘consolation’ which he advocates is an awareness of God, as identified with goodness and the source of beatitude, and of the negativity of evil... It may also have been as a result of reading Boethius that Dante adopted a vision of the universe governed by the principles of emanation from a divine centre of pure light and goodness, which now first appears in his writings.” (Holmes, p. 19-20)

⁴ “Some of these philosophical poems [of the *Convivio*] are addressed to a lady. Dante explains that she is not, as she might appear to be, a courtly love lady but an allegorical figure, standing for Philosophy... Dante also feels bound to explain how the allegorical lady came to take the place of Beatrice in his poetry.” (Holmes, p. 17)

⁵ Dante was “a poet before he became a philosopher and a poet of the courtly love tradition of the period. If philosophy was a lovely thing, it had to be imagined as a woman.” (Foster, “The Mind in Love”, p. 45)

⁶ Similarly, Augustine writes in *Confessions* 3:4 of reading Cicero’s *Hortensius* “[containing] an exhortation to philosophy”.

⁷ With regard to cultural similarities, for both Plato and Dante love is considered an “ennobling passion.” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 111) This passion is of military origin (Symonds, “The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love”, p. 77, 79; also see Phaedrus’ speech in *Symposium*), which has been refined by the intellect or through philosophy. “In both instances, an enthusiasm which had its root in human passion, after passing through a martial phase of evolution and becoming a social factor of importance in the raising of the race to higher spiritual power, assumes the aspect of philosophy, and connects itself with the effort of the intellect to reach the Beatific Vision.” (Symonds “The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love”, p. 80) Also they are conceived in primarily extramarital forms (ibid., p. 75 and p. 78); the relationship in Plato is between men (*Symposium* 209B6-8), while in Dante it is strictly heterosexual (Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, Book I, Ch. 1; Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 80).

philosophical concerning the nature of love,⁸ and regarding transformation, involving the ascent from the physical to the intellectual.⁹ Given that Plato was an ancient Greek pagan

They share similar attitudes towards sexual love in that desire must be channelled towards intellectual ends (*Symposium* 210B and Brandeis, p. 107). Though sexual attraction is encouraged, both forbid sexual intercourse. (*Phaedrus* 254B2 “monstrous and forbidden act”; also 255A5 “shameful to have commerce with a lover”; 256A6; also see Dover *Greek Homosexuality*. In Dante “abstractly considered, sexuality is thoroughly good; in the concrete, in its practical effects, it is often evil--damnably so.” Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 81. For the role of sexual attraction see *Symposium* 210A9 and Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 83 and p. 90.) Yet given these types of love’s close relation to physical passion, both forms of love in both Plato and Dante, the latter influenced by courtly love, are tied closely to a potential evil. This evil for Plato is homosexual pederastic intercourse, while for Dante it is adultery. (Symonds “The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love” p. 78 and Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 112) Further, both codes instantiating these concepts have “an ‘alien’ quality”. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 112)

⁸ With respect to philosophical similarities, we note even more striking likenesses concerning the theories of love. In both conceptions, *Eros* or *Amor* is neither bad nor good in itself but is defined by the object at which it is directed. (*Symposium* 180E6-181A1 and 181B4-5; *Purgatorio*, XVII, 103-5; Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 31-2 also cites *Purgatorio* 18: 14-15) Both theories of love acknowledge a dispute as to whether Love is a sentiment, a daemon or a god. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 126-7; *Symposium* 202D11-203A8; *Phaedrus* 243D3-7; also see Nardi “Dante and Medieval Culture, p. 40) Love is at times linked with tyranny (*Republic* 573a2; *Inferno* V; Nardi, “*Filosofia dell’Amore*”, p. 88; Cambon, p. 57) and also with the philosopher who being a lover of wisdom knows that he does not know. (*Symposium* 203-4; *Convivio* 3, i, 3. and 3, 1, 7. Cf. *Nic. Ethics*, ii 63b 30, cited by Foster, “The Mind in Love”, p. 46-7) Furthermore in both love is understood to be a desire for immortality and eternity. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 140 and 193; *Symposium* 207A1-3; *Paradiso* XXIV)

⁹ Concerning transformation that involves the ascent from the physical to the intellectual, many more similarities may be noted. Both Plato and Dante show and express the importance of possessing a sensitivity to physical beauty (*Phaedrus* 250B2-c7 and 254A3-B1; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 138). In this context, love begins with and is passed through the eyes. (*Phaedrus* 255C2-7, *Paradiso* XV.34-36, Pelikan p. 72 cites *Paradiso* XXVIII.3; *Phaedrus* 250D cited by Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 18 and 19; *Paradiso* XIV; Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 129) This vision of physical beauty as reminiscent of an ideal beauty causes a state of stupor in the lover, (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 126; *Convivio*, 4, 25,5; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982, b, 10; *Vita Nuova*; Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 7 and Ch. 1; Foster, “The Mind in Love”, p. 50) For both, this beauty functions as a lure (*Phaedrus* 254B6-8; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 22-23), the universal shining through the particular, which leads or causes the lover to ascend towards an ideal Beauty. (*Phaedrus* 254B6-7; cf. *Purgatorio* XXXI and *Purgatorio* I, 46-54; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 128-9; *Symposium* 210a6-211a4; *Paradiso* III.124-130; *Paradiso* XXI.10-12; *Paradiso* VIII.14-15; Pelikan, p. 72; with regard to the metaphysics of light see *Republic* 507A-509D, Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, Ch. III and *Structure and Thought*, p. 10- 17) This marks a movement from the physical to the intellectual, profane to sacred. (*Symposium* 210a8-10 and 210e5; *Vita Nuova*, Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 80; Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love, p. 81 cites *Purgatorio*, XXX, 127-41; XXXII, 103-05; XXXIII, 52-54; Shaw, p. 126-7 cites *Purgatorio* XXX, 48; Brandeis, p. 106). This process in both entails the enlargement of love (*Symposium* 210a10; Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 126) from the desire for one physical object to the love of the universal (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 113-120, p. 127-8, p. 140). Furthermore this ascent which is an ascent on the ladder of beauty is also related to the ascent of the ladder of truth and goodness. (*Symposium* 210; *Paradiso*, III, 1-3; Brandeis p. 121; *Vita Nuova*; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 7, 131-2; *Purgatorio* XXXI, 34-36; *Paradiso* XXX, 7 ff; *Purgatorio* XXVI, 59)

Though in Plato, unlike Dante, the ascents do not fully converge as the forms remain to some extent distinct, in both Plato and Dante, the pinnacle of the ascent is described imagistically as a sun so that the ascent can be described through the metaphor of light and illumination (*Republic* 517B7-C4; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 9-10). When considering specifically Plato’s *Phaedrus* in relation to Dante, both maintain the importance of the love of the individual (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 132, 137; *Phaedrus* 256A7-B7) in the pursuit of self-knowledge and transcendence (*Phaedrus* 255D2-3, 256B4;

and Dante subscribed fully to medieval Christianity, in discussing the similarities between the thought of Plato and Dante I am not claiming that there is a direct identity between many aspects of Platonism and Dantean thought, but only that there is a resemblance which seems to indicate an influence of Platonism, though indirect, on Dantean thought. However, in the light of the points of similarity between Plato's dialogues and Dante's poetry (detailed within the notes), we may posit the hypothesis that Plato influenced Dante, and hence seek to identify the manner by which these Platonic conceptions may have been indirectly transmitted to Dante.

2. THE NEO-PLATONIC CHAIN: PLATO, PLOTINUS, AUGUSTINE AND DANTE

Having noted Dante's exposure to Neo-Platonism through the Dominicans, Franciscans, Latini, and through reading Cicero and Boethius (and of course Aristotle), and having sketched the notable similarities between Plato and Dante with respect to their conceptions of love, we shall now attempt to trace the threads of the Neo-Platonic

Brandeis, p. 122). In both contexts, the lovers understand through otherness (*Phaedrus* 255C1-D6; Brandeis p. 124), through the mediation of the beloved. Though both use erotic language to describe intellectual/spiritual love (*Phaedrus* 255C1-D2 and 251B1-D1; *Paradiso* XXX. 70-74 and 88-89 cited by Pertile, p. 167), each prescribes a moral direction to passion (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 112). While each discusses free will (with regard to Plato "legitimate satisfaction" in Cornford "The Doctrine of *Eros*"; see Dante's *Monarchia* I; *Republic* 518D3-7; *Symposium* 208e2-209a5; Foster, "Dante's Idea of Love", p. 82; *Purgatorio* XVI-XVIII: 55; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 63), love is directed at moral perfection (*Symposium* 209B6-c2; *Phaedrus* 253B9-C2; Foster, "Dante's Idea of Love", p. 81-2; Holmes, 16; Nardi, "*Filosofia dell'Amore*", p. 92) so both views can be understood as being examples of perfectionism (*Symposium* 201C11-13; *Symposium* 213C5-6; Pelikan, p. 77; *Theaetetus* 150B5-D9; Pelikan, p. 73; Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 135), and both maintain a sense of mission (*Republic* (517C7-9, 519D1-520C9, 519B8-C4; *Purgatorio* XXXII.149, 155; *Paradiso* XXVII. 31-36; Pelikan, p. 76). In Plato and Dante the images of wings are employed to express a flight to truth (*Phaedrus* 251B1-C1, 255C7-D1, 247D6-7; *Paradiso* XXXIV, *Paradiso* XXV.49-50; Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 125). In this flight the lovers experience a sense of joyful *mania* in the presence of the beloved (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 14, 112; Symonds, "The Poetry of Chivalrous Love" in *Introduction to the Study of Dante* p. 258-60; Symonds "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love" p. 76-7) as well as a sense of poetic inspiration described as a type of *mania* (*Phaedrus* 244c-245A, 248D21, 249D4-E6, Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 7-8, 121, 128-131; Foster, "The Mind in Love", p. 48-50). Both seek to resolve the tension between the philosopher and the poet (*Phaedrus* 241D-243E; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 120-1, 131). "Lover, poet and pilgrim in Dante reconstituted the *Phaedrus* doctrine of 'salvation,' love, and poetic inspiration in extraordinary detail." (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 2) Furthermore, both seek to synthesize several traditions. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 113 and 140) Finally it is worth noting Nardi's observation that "even the last thesis of the *Phaedrus*--that true eloquence is the sincere expression of the feelings of the soul--finds a perfect echo in the verses of the poet: *I' mi son un, che quando amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando* [I am one who takes note when love inspires me and signify it after the manner in which it is said within me]". (Nardi, "Dante and Medieval Culture", p. 41)

influence upon Dante. The most plausible chain of influence is from Plato to Plotinus to Augustine, and thereby through medieval culture/monastic schools to Dante. Though the *Phaedrus* was formative for the neo-Platonic tradition,¹⁰ most of the items linking the texts under discussion in their treatments of love can be found in the *Symposium* though, as we shall see later, the culture of courtly love seems to have transmitted the notion of the love of the individual found in the *Phaedrus*. We shall therefore proceed by sketching certain topics addressed in the *Symposium* (and the *Phaedrus*), demonstrating their appearance in Plotinus, Augustine and Dante to show the putative line of influence. It would be possible to follow the overall line of argumentation of the *Symposium* in order to present the case, covering major issues such as whether love is *daemon*, god or state¹¹, the pursuit of *Eudaimonia*/Happiness¹², the pursuit of eternal possession of the Good¹³,

¹⁰ Supporting this view Foster ("The Mind in Love", note 33, p. 174) maintains "The *Phaedrus* was the keystone of the neoplatonic system, and the neoplatonists systemized its central doctrines in their theory of salvation through love's *extasis*. They gave us a rationale for finding God progressively as a result of spectative activity. The *extasis*, however, comes only to those who are prepared to receive it."

¹¹ Plato, Plotinus, Augustine and Dante all questioned the nature of love. In *Symposium* 202D4, Socrates states "If Love has no part in either goodness or beauty how can he be a God" after which Socrates has Diotima launch into the myth of the birth of *Eros* (203B1-204C5) to illustrate the point. By contrast in the *Phaedrus*, as we have discussed, Love is a god. Centuries later Plotinus enquires "What is Love? A God, a Celestial spirit, a state of mind?" after which he analyzes Plato's myth of the birth of *Eros* from the *Symposium*, in which he reinterprets the *poros* of III.5.7-9 as the Intellectual Principle from the One. Augustine resolves this problem by stating that as we have "the imprint of God our creator who loves us we desire to return to him, so that we are lovers of God who is Love and the beloved of Love." (see *Confessions* Book X, xxvii) In Dante, love is understood in all three ways mentioned by Plotinus: First everyone, including all in *Paradiso*, are in a state of desire and are therefore lovers. Secondly, Beatrice is love, a mediating spirit between the mortal and Heavenly in the *Commedia*, and as shown also in the *Vita Nuova* when we see a change from love as *amor* to *caritas* represented as Beatrice. *Amor*, in the *Vita Nuova*, is thereafter understood as a quality as opposed to the substance of Love, which is God as demonstrated at the end of *Paradiso*.

¹² Through the Platonic (as well as Aristotelian) tradition the idea that every person seeks happiness is a recurring theme. Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* (205A1-3) states that a longing for happiness is common to all men. Diotima thinks this is so self-evident that "there is no need for us to ask why men should want to be happy". This idea is discussed by Plotinus in the *Enneads* I.4 when he writes "If, then, the perfect life is within human reach the man attaining it attains happiness". Later Augustine writes "All men desire blessedness" (*Confessions* XX, 20; also "Is not a happy life the thing which all desire and there is no man at all that desires it not?", *Confessions* XX, 20; and "When I seek Thee, my God, I seek the blessed life" *Confessions* X, xx, 29; also see Cicero's *Hortensius*, "Certainly we all want to be happy". For discussion see Nygren, p. 476-7). However, as Augustine states also in *de Trinitate* 13, iv, 7, true happiness cannot be attained in this life but only in the presence of God. "The Happy life [is] to rejoice concerning thee unto thee for thy sake" (*Confessions* X, 22). Dante influenced by Augustine recognizes in the *Convivio* (like the *Symposium*, "*Convivio* means 'The Banquet.'" Holmes, p. 16) that perfect happiness can not be found in this life. Foster ("The Mind in Love", p. 47) writes, "Dante will tell us that the speculative felicity of pure knowing is not perfectly to be found on this side of eternity". In Virgil's speech in *Purgatorio* XVIII, he discusses man's inborn "craving for happiness" which can only be satisfied fully by God. "The norm of morality... is first and foremost the living human soul itself in its inborn and essential craving for happiness; and this because that craving can only in fact be fulfilled by God." (Foster, "Dante's Idea of

Love as the source of all motivation¹⁴, the pursuit of immortality¹⁵, the division of love

Love”, p. 74) This craving therefore is only fulfilled by God in Paradise and is indescribable, being a state simultaneously of continued desire and satisfaction. “It is constantly replenished and renewed...the desire of the blessed is eternally alive and yet eternally fulfilled.” (Pertile, p. 166; also p. 154-5) “In Dante’s paradise the blessed themselves feel constant desire..., it is in itself perfect, it is the tangible form of perfect love; this desire, hunger and thirst are constantly alive and constantly replenished. In Heaven the soul is not fed and satisfied once and for all, its desire extinguished for ever and ever; but as it reaches God, desire and fulfillment, perfectly balanced and simultaneous, become a timeless mode of being that is forever present.” (Pertile, p. 154-5) However, “it is precisely because Dante imagines and structures it in terms of a tension between desire and fulfillment that his Paradise becomes representable and *Paradiso* works as poetry”. (Pertile, p. 155)

¹³ This line of influence further shows the repeated longing to make the good one’s own forever. In the *Symposium* 205A6, Diotima maintains “we all long to make the good our own,” and in *Symposium* 206E9-10, “the lover longs for the good to be his own forever.” Plotinus (*Enneads* 6.9.8) who considers the good to be the One and the Supreme, states “we reach towards the Supreme,” and in *Enneads* V. I. 6., “the offspring must seek and love the begetter”. (Also see *Enneads* III, 5, 1; Love is....longing for the Good.”) In turn Augustine speaks of this first tendency in terms of good effects being inseparable from the blessed or happy life: “If [human nature] is not capable of [immortality] it is not capable of blessedness. For that a man may live blessedly, he must needs live. And if life quits him by dying, how can a blessed life remain with him?” (*de Trinitate* 13.8) He further speaks of this in relation to God the ultimate Good: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee”. (*Confessions*, 1,1) Dante, having the same conception of God uses terms similar to Augustine to discuss this same theme. “It is impossible for him ever to consent that he should turn from it...; for the good which is the object of the will is all gathered in it, and apart from it that is defective which there is perfect.” *Paradiso* XXXIII, 100-105) “The supreme aim, hope and (reaching out of the text and across to its reader) promise implicit in the pilgrim’s ascent is precisely to restore the unity and identity, beyond desire, of knowing and possessing, which indeed—the poet tells us—is what happens in the final vision, even if only for one momentary flash” (Pertile, p. 164), for the good to be his forever. (Also see Pertile, p. 146, 163.)

¹⁴ Plato, Plotinus, Augustine and Dante believe that Love motivates all things. In Plato’s *Symposium* (205D1-7) Diotima says every activity is done through desire, so every activity is motivated by love. Plotinus in the *Enneads* (5.1.6.) states that the One overflows giving off hypostases as “fire gives out its heat; snow is cold not merely to itself; fragrances” giving off their scent. In turn the “offspring must seek and love the begetter.” Augustine discusses this in terms of good and evil in *Confessions* II, 4 and X, 27 and *de Trinitate* 13. Dante has Virgil declare, ‘Neither Creator, my son, nor creature...was ever without love, whether natural or rational’ (*Purg.* XVII, 91-93). Dante’s work can be seen as “a variant on the Neo-Platonist tradition that all things go in a cyclic movement from and to the divine One or Good.” (Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 90; also see p. 86-7) *Paradiso* ends with Dante writing, “*L’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle.*” There are “two parallel impulsions from God, the one driving the sun and the stars, the other impelling a man’s desire and will... the God-swayed motion of the stars is an objective fact to which a newly achieved state of one human soul is now being likened.” (Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 66)

¹⁵ Likewise these thinkers and poets believe that all men seek immortality. In Plato’s *Symposium* 207A2 Diotima states, “Love is a longing for immortality”. Plotinus (*Enneads* III. 51) borrowing much from the *Symposium* writes, “There are those that feel also a desire of such immortality as lies within mortal reach.” Augustine, influenced both by Christianity and also by Platonism, writes in the *Confessions* XXX, “all men long for immortality,” and in the *de Trinitate* 13. 8, he writes “No one wrongly wills immortality, if human nature is by God’s gift capable of it.” This introduces the notion of grace associated with Christian agapic love. Dante takes over both aspects of Augustinian belief fully. For Dante throughout *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, all desire is a desire for immortality. Even in the *Inferno*, concern for the living world can be seen as a concern for self-perpetuation, as demonstrated in part by Cavalcanti’s concern for his son Guido (*Inferno* X, 67-80). Also Cavalcanti’s condemnation resulted from his seeking “immortality” in the wrong way through Epicurianism. (*Inferno* X, 13-14; see Lucretius’ notion of “immortality” in *On The Nature of Things*.)

into two forms, earthly and heavenly¹⁶, the ladder of Beauty¹⁷, the Good or God likened

¹⁶ Plato, Plotinus, Augustine and Dante consider love to take two forms; earthly and heavenly. In the *Symposium*, love can either be “procreancy...of the body...[or] procreancy...of the spirit rather than the flesh.” (208E2-209 2) In the *Enneads* III.5.1, “This aspiration takes two forms, that of the good whose devotion is for beauty itself, and that other which seeks its consummation in some vile act.” As Platonic *eros* is distinguished by the object to which it is directed likewise “the difference between *Caritas* and *Cupiditas* is not one of *kind*, but of *object*” (Nygren, p. 494), which in turn defines the kind. “Man has to choose between *Caritas* and *Cupiditas*, between directing his love up to the eternal [love of God] or down to the temporal...*Cupiditas* [being] love of the world.” (Nygren, p. 483). “St. Augustine says, in effect, that *concupiscentia* is the opposite of *caritas*, but that both have a single source in *amor*. [‘Love is covetousness (*concupiscentia*) when the creature is loved for its own sake; and then it serves not to aid our use but to corrupt our enjoyment.’ But ‘a love of the creature, if referred to the Creator, becomes charity (*caritas*) and not covetousness’. *De Trinitate*, IX, sec. 12. trans. Burnaby] His reference here is to concupiscence in its wider sense, as all possessive creature-love; and he opposes it to that totally selfless love of God in which all particular loves are transmuted.” (Brandeis, p. 190-191) “Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* continues, ‘I mean by charity that affection of the mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and one's neighbor in subordination to God; by lust I mean that affection of the mind which aims at enjoying one's self and one's neighbor and other corporeal things without reference to God.’” (Foster, “Dante's Idea of Love”). In this way *Caritas* as “*gratis*” is the opposite of *cupiditas*. Augustine expresses this in the tension between carnal and spiritual longing: “Late have I loved you beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those created things which you made” (*Confessions* 10:38). These two sorts of love and their tension in Dante's *Commedia* (Foster, “Dante's Idea of Love”, p. 96) will be explored in this thesis through Francesca seen as earthly *eros/amor* and Beatrice, understood to embody *caritas*, the medieval fusion of heavenly *eros* and *agape*.

¹⁷ Plato describes the Ladder of ascent to the beautiful in *Symposium* 210a6-211a4 and also 211c2-8. Recollection of the beautiful is more thoroughly marked out in the *Phaedrus* 254b. Plotinus in *Enneads* II, 9, 16 discusses this phenomenon with regard to painting when he writes, “Now if the sight of Beauty excellently reproduced upon a face hurries the mind to that other Sphere, surely no one seeing the loveliness lavish in the world of sense...could be so dull-witted, so immovable, as not to be carried by all this to recollection.” For Mazzeo, “For both Plotinus and St. Augustine... beauty is a function of that principle which constitutes things in their being and their intelligibility. In this they agree. But St. Augustine gave to beauty a purpose in the order of things absent in Plotinus. Its primary function is to make known the Creator.” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 69; also see Rom. 1: 20.) Augustine in *Confessions* X. 10-11 traces the ladder of Beauty; also see *Confessions* X, 9 when he describes his search for God in creation: “And I replied unto these, which stand so round about these doors of my flesh: Answer me concerning my God since you are not he, answer me something of him. And they cried out with a loud voice: He made us. My questioning with them was my thought; and their answer was their beauty.” Mazzeo notes, “Although the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* were unknown in the West, the elements of the doctrines contained in these works were widely diffused. The ladder of love and beauty to God were cornerstones of much medieval theological speculation. To reconstitute the *Phaedrus* doctrine, it was simply required to synthesize love of beauty in a person with the amorous ascent to God.” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 167) Dante thinks, according to Mazzeo (*Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 122), that “All human beauty, natural or portrayed, is bait, serving to capture and fix the eyes so as to possess the mind”. “If I flame on thee in the warmth of love, beyond the measure witnessed upon earth, and so vanquish the power of thine eyes, marvel not; for this proceedeth from perfect vision.” (*Paradiso*. V, 1-5) “The lure of beauty for the eyes and the eyes themselves as the most beautiful of bodily parts run as a unifying thread through Dante's works from the first visions of the *Vita nuova* to the final visions of the *Paradiso*.” (*Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 127) Mazzeo traces the ladder of beauty showing a like pattern of influence. Given that “the light and Beauty of God shine through creation” (Brandeis, *The Ladder of Vision*, p. 198; Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 115-6, *Structure and Thought*, p. 155), the increase in beauty which is represented as light lures Dante to ascend to God. Simultaneously as the beauty and light increase so does his desire/love, his wisdom and existence/being. Thus in this way “the ladders of light, being, love, knowledge, and beauty are all actually fused; this fusion permits Dante to ascend to God as poet, lover,

to the sun¹⁸, the vision of the Good or Beauty as an inexpressible experience¹⁹, though it would remain important to respect significant differences in conception.²⁰ Nevertheless,

philosopher, and mystic seer all at once" (Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 117; also see Brandeis, p. 127), resembling the *musicos* in the *Phaedrus*. Mazzeo (*Structure and Thought*, p. 68) concludes that "all medieval speculation on the nature of love and beauty was ultimately Platonic and Neo-Platonic, and the transmission of this classical stock of ideas was in great part the work of the church fathers". (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 67-75; For the continuation of the argument concerning beauty in Plotinus and Dante see Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 78-83.) However though consistent with Neo-Platonism this fusion of the ladders is not Platonic as the dialogues do not suggest one ladder but several reaching towards differing forms which though related are not identical. The way these ladders join shows the neo-Platonic influence on Dante. The ladders form part of the cyclical passage by which the lover having been sent out is drawn back to God through his love of beauty and truth "The circle is thus closed: the ladders of love and beauty are conceptually unified in the all-inclusive idea of universal love ordering to each other the forms of love and the manifestations of beauty. This all-embracing principle of love is the same Love in whose presence Dante assumes the circular movement of eternity, the Love which moves the sun and other stars." (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 83; also see note 42, p. 193)

¹⁸ All four thinkers use the image of the sun to describe the pinnacle of the ascent. Plato describes the form of the Good as a sun in *Republic* 517B8-C4, further suggested by the revelation of the form of the beautiful as a flash which "bursts upon him" in *Symposium* 211e4-5. Plotinus describes the One's "circumradiation—produced from the Supreme but from the Supreme unaltering—and may be compared to the brilliant light encircling the sun". (*Enneads*, 5.1.6; also see 5.1.7) Mazzeo (*Structure and Thought*, p. 142-3) points out that, "St. Augustine adopted the famous platonic metaphor of the Good as the sun of the intelligible world, a metaphor widely used by both pagan neoplatonists and Christian fathers. It is largely through his influence that the platonic interpretations of the sun symbol became widely diffused among medieval thinkers". Dante calls God in *Paradiso* XXIX: 136 "*Prima Luce*." Mazzeo writes that for Dante, -"God is the Eternal Light (*eterno lume*, 43) as *lume* or radiated light. He is Supreme Light (*somma luce*, 67) and Eternal - Light (*luce eterna*, 83 and 124) as *luce* or the source of light. The love and knowledge relating the Persons of the Trinity are a kind of circling of reflected light (127-128)". Furthermore resembling Plotinus, "the relation of multiplicity to this unitary Primal Light (*prima luce*, XXIX, 136) is one of creation and of "emanation"... The relation between the various orders of being including the angels is one of an "outflowing" or "downpouring"; Dante frequently describes it as a "raying" (*raggiare*, VII, 75). God pours out, without stint, His goodness, beauty, love, and light-irradiating all things and conforming them to Himself in their degree (cf. XIII, 52 ff.)" (Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 110-111).

¹⁹ For these thinkers, an encounter with the divine comes as an inexpressible experience. Plato in the *Phaedrus* 247C3-4 writes of "that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily" Plotinus describes how "In knowing, soul and mind abandon its unity; it cannot remain a simplex: knowing is taking account of things; that accounting is multiple; the mind thus plunging into number and multiplicity departs from unity" (*Enneads* 6.9.4) yet in grasping the One, the soul is "caught away" (6, 9, 11) beyond rational thought. "It is not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended. The man formed by this mingling with the Supreme must...carry its image impressed upon him." (*Enneads*, 6.9.11) Augustine in *Confessions* 1.4 writes of the "incomprehensibility" of God; also see the close of the Ostia vision. Furthermore the underlying emphasis of the "inexpressibility of God runs through and underlies *de Trinitate* 1-2. And finally Dante emphasizes the inexpressibility and incomprehensibility of God. (*Par.* XXXII. 142-145)" (Pertile, p. 145-146, 170-172) "I saw things that he who from that height descends, forgets or can not speak; for nearing its desired end, our intellect sinks into an abyss so deep that memory fails to follow it." (*Paradiso*, 1. 5-9, echoing 2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Pertile, p. 145- 146) This is introduced and emphasised by the fact that Beatrice's beauty as she approaches God becomes indescribably beautiful. (Pelikan, p. 58-9 refers to *Paradiso* XVIII, 10-12, XXX. 14-18)

²⁰ These similarities and threads of influence do not, of course, indicate that these texts are concerned with the same God or experience. Similar terminology is used to describe very different things. Plato describes forms or principles. In *Symposium* 211b he writes of the form of the Beautiful while in *Republic* 517B8-c4 he writes of the form of the Good; "the idea of the good...the cause for all things of all that is right and

given the limits of space we shall here concentrate upon only one parallel, *eros*, as this is the primary concern for the thesis.

With regard to *eros*, "Dante's general theory of love falls easily into place as a variant on the Platonic tradition" (Foster, "Dante's Idea of Love", p. 75). The Plato of *Symposium* 210 and *Republic* 518C7-10 maintains that though *eros* can be directed at either carnal or intellectual/spiritual ends, properly trained, it "[becomes] a love of ideal goodness and beauty," the forms of the Good and Beautiful (see note 16).

This conception of *eros* is rethought in Plotinus' *Enneads* in that *eros* emanating from the One involves a return to the One creating a cyclical path of *eros*. This seems to result from Plotinus' conflation of the ascent to the Form of the Good in the *Republic* with that to the Beautiful in the *Symposium*. The aspects of the *Symposium* appropriated

beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and the author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason." Plotinus describes an impersonal source or unity beyond being: "Generative of all, The Unity is none of all; neither thing nor quantity nor quality nor intellect nor soul; not in motion, not at rest, not in place, not in time: it is the self-defined, unique in form or, better, formless, existing before Form was, of Movement or Rest, all of which are attachments of Being and make Being the manifold it is" (*Enneads* 6,9,3). Describing the Judaeo-Christian God "I am that I am" Augustine, given the limits of human expression, uses similar terminology: "Most high, utterly good, utterly powerful, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, deeply hidden yet most intimately present, perfection of both beauty and strength, stable and incomprehensible, immutable and yet changing all things" (*Confessions* 1.4). In *de Trinitate*, Augustine writes of God as the Trinity, stressing the importance of the incarnation and crucifixion as we will discuss later. We have, that is, accounts of entirely different things, one a principle, another an abstract source, and the third the omnipotent and personal God. Nonetheless, Watson (*Greek Philosophy*, p. 24-25) appropriately states that "the vision of beauty [in the *Symposium*] is described in terms which St. Augustine could have easily adopted for his vision of God in the *Confessions*." Following Augustine Dante takes on the Christian understanding of God as the Trinity (*Paradiso* XXXIII, 127-131), and the ultimate source and good, uniting goodness, beauty and truth.

Here the terminology employed is stretched almost beyond recognition. Language which was initially used to articulate one experience has been extended to cover or is employed as a tool to express something with very different meanings. Though the Christian God and the Platonic forms and the Plotinian One are entirely different, through using similar terminology/language the careless reader may misunderstand what they signify, assuming that they are similar or the same.

This brings us to the most evident difference in Plato's and Dante's conceptions of God. Plato was part of a culture adhering to Greek paganism which was "plastic, objective, anthropomorphic. The Greeks thought of their deities as persons, whose portraits could be carved in statues." (Symonds, "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p.83) though *Republic* III shows Plato's critique of this view in that gods must be good and beautiful, nonetheless he considers the gods as inferior to the forms, which "nourished" them (*Phaedrus* 247) and were their "source" (*Republic* 517b-c). In contrast Dante held to the Christian notion of God as Trinity in all its incomprehensibility and unrepresentability. "Medieval religion was spiritual, separating the divinity man worshipped from corporeal form, so far as this was compatible with the dogma of the incarnation. Greek philosophy, in spite of its occasional excursions into mysticism, remained positive. Medieval philosophy eagerly embraced allegory and 'anagogical interpretations.'" (Symonds, "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 83) For Dante God loves mankind and out of this love created man with a desire for his creator in order that God may enter into a love relationship with us; such conceptions are alien to Plato, whether with respect to gods or forms.

are the *eros* driven ascent of the ladder to the form of Beauty (*Symposium* 210E2-211A4), and the fact that Beauty seems to possess a drawing power (See Watson, *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God*, p. 24-25).²¹ Combined with this drawing power, in the myth of the Cave, the “idea of the good...[is] the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful...the authentic source of truth and reason” (*Republic* VII, 517B8-C4). Thus for Plotinus the good seems to bring together all the ladders which in Plato though related seem distinct, as the forms of beauty, goodness, truth (and temperance) are distinct. Furthermore as the sun (*Republic* VII, 517B1-3), the light of the good, emanates beyond itself, according to its nature, so the good, being the ultimate cause of being, the source of goodness, beauty and truth, overflows in the act of creation (Plotinus reads creation as emanation and overflowing of *eros*²²) after which it returns to the good. Thus here the Plotinian cycle of *eros* seems to find its origin.²³

²¹ “Plato represents [the Forms] as exercising an attraction and taking on a quasi-personal appeal.” (Watson, *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God*, p. 24-25)

²² “One element that is quite foreign to genuine Platonism....[is] the descending movement in the cosmos, or the idea of emanation.” (Nygren, p. 188-9) “In the account he gives of the upward way, Plotinus is in the main dependent on Plato; but in working out his theory of the downward way he had to depend chiefly on himself.” (Nygren, p. 195) This changes the origin of *Eros* which as articulating an ascent was the “longing of man for divine life.” (Nygren, p. 195) Nygren notes that as “*agape*...is the way of descent...if we ignore the difference it makes that the downward way of Christian *Agape* leads from God to sinful man, while the Plotinian way of descent leads from the Divine to matter”, given their similar structure they might be confused particularly as Plotinus states “the higher cares for the lower and adorns it” (IV, 8, 8).

Nygren, in maintaining that Platonism can only involve an upward movement (Nygren, p. 196) seems not to accept that the idea of emanation comes from the image of the sun. However he is entirely correct that Plotinian *eros* is distinct from Christian *agape*. Plotinus is thinking of “a cosmic process” as opposed to salvation and for Plotinus god does not descend into the world as that would indicate guilt and sin produced by “involuntary” weakness, but instead remains purely transcendent, “inert, exercising its influence only by ‘passive rule’ (IV. 8. 2)” like the sun (Nygren, p. 196-7) (“self-sufficient and never issues forth from its sublime repose” VI, 7, 41, and V, 1, 6). “Fellowship with God is not brought about by God’s coming down to man, but by man’s climbing up in *Eros* to God.” (Nygren, p. 196) “In spite of all he says of the downward way, there is in Plotinus no real descent of the Divine.” (Nygren, p. 196) Christianity “tells of a descent of the Godhead into the lowest depths of human weakness; the latter calls for an elevation of man to superhuman Divinity” (Zeller, p. 444)

Barker (2002) here notes a connection with “the ‘cyclic’ structure of the progression of understanding in the simile of the Divided Line. The route by which understanding is reached goes first from the bottom up, and then returns, from the top down. The fact that true understanding is only attained in the final stage, ‘top-down’, reflects the ontological order; other realities are as they are because the Good is as it is.”

²³ “The later Platonists, especially Plotinus, developed their master’s teaching by combining his notion of the absolute divine Good with his ideas about human *eros*. [See Armstrong, “Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agape*”, p. 105-21.] Thus Plotinus conceived of the Deity, the One or Good, not only as the universal source of goodness but also--and this point is crucial--as the source of *eros* itself, of an aspiration in all things toward the absolute Goodness: He gives “a dynamic being which turns back towards its source, which looks, tends, strives towards Him: and in us this movement back to our source is *eros*, a love given by and conforming us to the Good we love.” [ibid., p. 113] “The soul,” says Plotinus, “loves Him (God),

Furthermore, Plotinus states that God is *Eros*. "He is worthy to be loved, and is Himself love, namely, love of Himself, as He is beautiful only from Himself and in Himself" (*Enneads*, VI. 8. 15) This is distinct from the Christian "God is *agape*". *Eros* indicates a lack or longing which leads to the pursuit of the Divine and cannot be applied to the Divine as the Divine is completely full and lacks nothing (*Symposium* 202). Plotinus is not abandoning the Platonic use but is saying that God is *Eros* to himself.

As the ultimate goal of all *Eros*, He cannot be Himself caught up in the movement of *Eros*. This fact, that there is nothing outside God which could be the aim of his strivings and *Eros*, Plotinus expresses by saying that God is certainly *Eros* but *Eros* to Himself. In this way he succeeds in applying the *Eros*-scheme to God, without infringement either of His position as ultimate end, or of His absolute *eudaimonia*, self-sufficiency and autarchy. God is at once the ultimate source and the ultimate goal of all things. (Nygren, p. 199)

At this point one notes the distinction between *eros* and *agape* clearly. If *eros* is applied to God, he becomes an "acquisitive and egocentric character,...entirely taken up with itself and the enjoyment of its own perfection." "God is *eros* has no meaning unless *Eros* is...self-love; but to speak of God's *Agape* as self-love, as an *agape* directed to itself, would be sheer nonsense" (Nygren, p. 199).

Considering the difference between *eros* and *agape* more generally,

Erao, *eros* in the New Testament is sexual love, but also spiritualized...of upward striving and quest of the human soul towards the suprasensual and divine...called forth by the inherent worth of its object, and the desire to possess and enjoy its object. It is essentially egocentric, seeking its object for the sake of its own satisfaction and self-fulfillment and self enhancement...*Agapazo*, *agapao* [having] neither the warmth of *phileo* nor the intensity of *erao*...refers to the will rather than to the emotion, and often conveys the idea of showing love by action. The substantive *agape* is almost entirely absent from pre-Biblical Greek. It is [translated from *ahab* because it is] free from erotic associations and conveyed the idea of a love that

moved by Him to love from the beginning." [*Enneads*, VI, 7, 31; 9, 9] Moreover God, as the active source of *eros*, may be called not only *erasmion* (lovable) but *eros* (love itself): "He is at once lovable, and love, and love of Himself." [ibid., VI, 8. 15; Also see Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, pp. 78-112] Thus... the upward path from the many to the One, from creatures to God, implies a prior downward path. *Eros* moves in a circle; things return through it to God because they came through it from God." (Foster, "Dante's Idea of Love", p. 76)

Adding to Plotinus' reading of Plato, Foster notes the influence of Proclus' belief that each movement of going out results in a counter movement, a return, so that "the whole cosmos follows this triadic pattern, whose unifying principle is *eros*." (Foster, "Dante's Idea of Love", p. 77)

showed itself by helping its object rather than by desiring to possess and enjoy it. (Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, p. 133-4)

Soble (p. 12) simply distinguishes man's love for God as *eros* from *agape*, God's love for man. Concerning love within the *agape* tradition,

the attractive and unattractive properties of the object, the object's value, are irrelevant. The irrelevance of merit is clear in *agape* as God's (or Jesus') love for humans: God does not love that which is already in itself worthy of love, but on the contrary, that which in itself has no worth acquires worth just by becoming the object of God's love. *Agape* has nothing to do with the kind of love that depends on the recognition of valuable quality in its object; *Agape* does not recognise value, but creates it. Why, then, does God love humans? 'The 'reason' why God loves men is that God is God, and that is reason enough.' [see Morgan, *Love: Plato, the Bible, and Freud*, p. 74] As Nygren says, "There is only one right answer...Because it is His nature to Love...The only ground for it is to be found in God himself". (Soble, p. 12; also see Richardson, p. 132)

Though clearly distinct from *eros*, Singer (Vol. 1, p. 71) using deceptively Neo-Platonic language writes, "*Agape* is...spontaneous. It simply radiates, like the glorious sun or the universe at large, giving forth energy for no apparent reason." The distinction of *eros* from *agape* for Richardson is demonstrated in the Old Testament in which love of man for God is "not something independent, not the mystical quest of the religious *eros*, the upwards striving of the human spirit towards the divine, such as is prominent in Plato [and] Plotinus....but rather something dependent on God's prior love, the response of man to God's love, his gratitude." (Richardson, p. 133) This indicates in contrast to Nygren that agapic love is not restricted to God but that man too can have agapic love whether directed towards God or his fellow man. However such agapic love on the part of man is dependent upon and in response to God's love for him whereby in agapic love man is always loving God first. Augustine as we will see considers this reciprocation to indicate a blending of *eros* and *agape* which he calls *caritas*, a term which given his lack of Greek he also applies to God, *Caritas*. However as man's concern for himself is inescapable due to his embodiment, his feelings and motivations are generally impure and mixed, making the above distinctions inevitably ambiguous.

Returning to Plato, Nygren's reading of Platonic *eros* as self-love proves not only pessimistic concerning human goodness,²⁴ but also problematic in that it is an oversimplification (Outka, p. 62).²⁵ Vlastos (p. 6) opposes Nygren saying that his "treatment of the 'Greek' idea of love fails to reckon with the elementary fact that *philia* is a near-synonym of *agape*, and that, regardless of what their philosophers said, Greeks, being human, were as capable of genuine, non-egoistic, affection as are we". Osborne comments upon Vlastos' critique saying that while "Vlastos disagrees with Nygren's one-sided and inadequate understanding of what the Greeks could regard as love, he does not actually break loose of the dichotomy that he inherits from Nygren" (Osborne, p. 222). She likewise vehemently opposes Nygren's view that *Eros* is purely selfish and *agape* is selfless, that man can only have *eros*/need-love for God, never *agape*/gift-love. Nygren assumes the "total discontinuity" of Christian *agape* from all prior conceptions of love thereby identifying a "pure and original Christian motif, unadulterated by influence from either Classical Greek thought or Hellenistic Judaism" (Osborne, p. 3). For Osborne, the central problem with Nygren's understanding the relation of *eros* and *agape* is that though "Nygren recognizes the close connection between love by God and love from God in the New Testament (*Agape and Eros*, 129 and 140) and the use of *agape* to make this connection,...he underestimates the extent to which love for God is also implied. That love from God might be love for God is something that Nygren's dichotomy of *agape* and *eros* misses" (Osborne, p. 29), though this is a point which seems to be assimilated into Augustine's notion of *caritas* as understood by Nygren.

However the main problem with Nygren's account of *eros* is that Nygren only focuses upon one part of *eros*. Rist notes this when he writes,

²⁴ "The implications of analyzing mankind's love for God as a case of needy desire in accordance with such a reading of Diotima's speech are to make humanity's motives self-interested and grasping. It does not leave humanity morally the better for its devotion to God." (Osborne, p. 55)

²⁵ In discussing Nygren, Outka writes, "Nygren claims to identify an entire '*Eros*-religion' and '*Eros*-ethics' governed by such self-seeking" (Outka, p. 57), which he considers unsatisfactory, seeming to propound "a version of what moral philosophers commonly call psychological egoism" (Outka p. 59). Outka criticizes Nygren for being "oversimplified" in that he sees *eros*-ethics as pure self-interest and *agape*-ethics as "utter self-giving". Outka suggests Nygren's view to be weak given the idea of 'civic righteousness' which produces fellow-feeling resulting in "transcendence of one's own interests" as well as the fact that there may be fluctuation within a person and group. Secondly "*agape* [is] an actual alternative to acquisitiveness through divine grace, as something available to men in their present confusions" (Outka p. 62). Men can choose to "[reject] psychological egoism as an exhaustive account" (Outka p. 63).

This violent sense of need is what Plato primarily means by love, and to the casual reader his analysis of the nature of *Ἔρως* gives little trace of any non-appetitive ideal. However, when we come to consider the actions of the Gods and of those perfect mortals who have been able to follow the path of *Ἔρως* to its end, we find a considerably less egoistic, and as the future was to show, more fruitful notion, that of creation as a result of 'Love perfected' (Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, p. 26).

Rist "finds in the Platonic texts both the acquisitive love that Nygren found and an other-regarding creative love" (Osborne, p. 54), as is evident in the conception in the *Symposium* of "begetting upon the beautiful in body and soul" (206 b-e) and later "procreating true virtue" (212). Osborne (p. 55) acknowledges this when she writes "Even within Diotima's speech, and certainly within Plato and the Platonist tradition, there is an alternative model of *eros* at work."²⁶ She goes on to state that Nygren's dichotomy is problematic in that a loving relationship is "more than a one-sided transaction" in that it involves both giving and taking. "Within the Greek tradition of *eros* it is necessary to account for the other-regarding devotion to a beloved whose benefit is sought for her own sake; and within the Christian account of love and charity it is plain that the generosity shown to the beloved can, or should, also be a joy to the giver...Both *eros* and *agape* can be found to incorporate both kinds of love in parallel ways." (Osborne, p. 69)

In view of the above considerations, but even more explicitly from the discussion of *Eros* in the myth of the birth of *Eros*, Nygren's reading of *eros* is problematic in that it presupposes that *eros* is all lack while, as we have seen in *Symposium* 203, *eros* combines *penia* and *poros*. In possessing the two strands, *eros* can accentuate either the *poros*-dominant stand or the *penia*-dominant strand as demonstrated in the first half of the thesis. The *poros*-dominant strand of *eros*, though distinct from *agape*, in Plato does involve an aspect of resource, the ability to reason and faith in virtue and understanding, which allows for a passage through *aporiai* to increasing knowledge. Furthermore, later in the Platonic tradition *poros* is reinterpreted (or misinterpreted) by Plotinus as a pouring out of resource from the One, evident in Plotinus' reading of the birth of *Eros* (*Enneads*

²⁶ Osborne further notes that we are prevented "from reading into the *Symposium* an acquisitive theory of love such as Nygren found there since Plato himself shows that that is unsatisfactory in the *Lysis*" which "effectively undermines the notion of love that Nygren and many others have found in Diotima's speech". (Osborne, p. 57)

III, 5, 7-9). Whether involving Socrates' desire to beget virtue in others or later Plotinus' notion of *poros* as resource in the emanation of reason principles from the One, Nygren's view of *eros* as self-love only takes into account one strand of *eros* and misses the other half, which arguably is the truer form of love (and which on the later interpretation in its outpouring shows some resemblance to *agape*).

Nonetheless, as we noted in Chapter VI, Greek virtue-based ethics involve a quest for ethical self-perfection which functions as the "ethical ideal" (Barker, 2003). In this pursuit of ethical perfection, the *poros* strand which involves the aiding of others is indispensable, as being virtuous oneself involves the begetting of virtue in others which by contributing to their pursuit of self-perfection is, on the terms provided by the *Symposium*, a great gesture of love. Nonetheless in this context, as Barker (2003) writes, "it becomes difficult, if not unintelligible, to conceive 'selfless' love as an ethical ideal". In Neo-Platonism, the One as *Eros* loves itself, while the pursuit of the One is likewise grounded upon the pursuit of self-perfection through union with the One. This seems to indicate that the Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions of *eros*, though necessarily involving strong other-regarding and "selfless" components, are concerned with the desire for self-perfection, hence on some level self-love, in contrast to Christian *agape* from God to man which is purely selfless. In thus distinguishing *eros* from *agape*, this provides some support for the gist of Nygren's rather insensitive reading.

Distinct from Plato's view of *Eros* as daimon or god, from Plotinus' god as *Eros*, and from primitive Christianity's God as *Agape*, Augustine in calling God *Caritas* brings together *Eros* and *Agape*. "The meeting of *Eros* and the *Agape* motifs in Augustine's doctrine of *Caritas* ...concerns the very heart of his conception of Christianity." (Nygren, p. 457)²⁷ Though Augustine distinguishes between erosic and agapic love, *amor ex*

²⁷ Never ceasing to be a Platonist, Augustine "has done more than any other, by combining things Neo-Platonic and Christian, to import the *Eros* motif into Christianity and to procure ecclesiastical sanction for it...Judged by the primitive Christian idea of *Agape*...the Christian idea of love has suffered seriously through being combined with the Neo-Platonic *Eros* motif" (Nygren, p. 459). Nygren explains this when he writes, "If Christian love is thought of as a form of 'acquisitive love' and interpreted to mean that we seek our own '*bonum*' in God, then the theocentric character of the Christian Commandment of Love is undoubtedly lost. Even though God is described as the highest good, this does not alter the fact that He is degraded to the level of a means for the satisfaction of human desire. 'Love to God', as interpreted by Augustine, loses a good deal of its original Christian meaning" (Nygren, p. 500). Opposing Nygren's view that Augustine's notion of *caritas* which combines *agape* and Platonic *eros* damages true Christian *agape*, Foster ("Dante's Idea of Love", p. 77) thinks *eros* can "reappear...in ways that were more or less

miseria and *amor ex misericorde*,²⁸ he however “wanted to maintain both *Eros* and *Agape* at once”.²⁹ He settles the problem by recognizing that though *eros* could bring him to the recognition of God, it could not bridge the rift between himself and God due to his sin (*Confessions* 7; Nygren 471)³⁰ hence the need for God’s *agape*, his *humilitas*, shown through the incarnation, crucifixion, and grace which are elements quite foreign and controversial for Platonism.³¹ Part of this grace is the desire/*caritas* in our hearts to seek God.³² Thus “When God gives Himself to us in Christ, He gives us at once the object we are to love and the *Caritas* with which to love it. The object we are to love is Himself, but *Caritas* also is Himself, who by the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in our hearts” (Nygren, p. 525). So the gift of God’s Spirit in our hearts (an expression of God’s *agape*) creates a longing and resource (understanding, truth and power) which enables man to return to God thereby merging *eros* and *agape* and producing a circle of love. So for Augustine *caritas* is an upwards love directed to God, as shown in *Confessions* 1: 1: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”³³

Dante adopts the notion of *caritas* from Augustine in terms of desire to return to God and uses it in the figure of Beatrice. Dante in the *Convivio* IV, xii, 14 writes “the chief desire in everything, and the first given it by nature, is to return to Him”. This desire of

authentically Christian... The essential features of his love-doctrine are historically explained by Neo-Platonist influences, but in themselves they do not imply any weakening of Christian dogma.”

²⁸ Augustine “distinguishes between two sorts of love, a love that is due to the dryness of need and longing (*indigentiae siccitate*)...and a love that springs out of the fulness of goodness and benevolence (*beneficentiae ubertate*), or...*amor ex miseria* and *amor ex misericordia*. What is the difference between these two, if not that between *Eros* and *Agape*? Augustine seems to be well aware that God’s love to us must be distinguished from *Eros*-love. God’s love is a love of mercy and of the fulness of goodwill. *Eros*-love ascends and seeks the satisfaction of its needs; *Agape*-love descends in order to help and to give.” (Nygren, p. 469)

²⁹ Though Nygren writes, “He was unaware that they are diametrically opposed to each other and that the relation between them must be an Either—Or” (Nygren p. 470), the *poros* aspect of *Eros* is actually closer to *agape*, while only the *penia* is opposite.

³⁰ Though he distinguishes between erosic and agapic love, “Augustine never doubts that Christian love to God is the same as Platonic *Eros* and that the Way of *Eros* leads ultimately to the same God as Christianity proclaims” (Nygren, p. 466). *Eros* for Augustine always remains an essential part of the process of returning to God.

³¹ Nygren, p. 469-70; see also for philosophical reaction to Christianity, Watson, “Celsus and the Philosophical Opposition to Christianity”, p. 165-176.

³² “*Caritas* is on the one hand that gift which man receives by grace, on the other hand it is ‘the fulfilling of the law’ and so the sum of all virtues.” (Nygren, p. 514) “He does not possess any *Caritas* in himself, and if he is to gain it, it must be given to him by a special Divine act of grace, it must be infused into his heart from without.” (Nygren, p. 522)

³³ See *Enneads* VI, 9, 8 and *Republic* VII 532E3.

“everything”, attributed to “nature”, suggests a Neo-Platonic influence perhaps showing traces of the *Symposium* and *Republic*. However in the *Commedia* Beatrice embodies *caritas*, the merging of heavenly *eros* and *agape*, which came from God (from *beato/beata* meaning “blessed” or “blissful”), who brings Dante back to his creator through their love. She therefore represents God’s grace, an expression of his *agape*.³⁴ While having been Dante’s beloved on earth, the object of his desire and source of his inspiration, she as *caritas* brings together Platonic and Christian traditions. Indeed, she seems to connect the *Phaedrus*’ notion of the love of the individual, probably transmitted through the tradition of the Troubadours and courtly love, with the philosophical tradition of the *Symposium* (*Republic* and *Phaedrus*) transmitted through Plotinus and Augustine to Dante. The figure of Beatrice brings together these three traditions (Christian, Platonist, and courtly love) leading Dante back to God. Thus Dante’s “desire and will, like a wheel that spins with even motion, were revolved by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars” (*Paradiso* XXXIII, 143-5), which in itself articulates a cycle of love. However, for Dante, like Augustine, this is only made truly possible through God’s grace, his *caritas*, which is distinct from *eros*, as it presupposes and involves the intervention of God as *agape*.³⁵

Given this analysis we may agree with Foster (“Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 77) that “a fairly direct line leads from this Neo-Platonism to Dante, even though it lies through Christianity.” However in contrast to Foster, while *eros* does follow a similar “basic

³⁴ In contrast to Nygren’s *agape*, which is fully “sovereign in the sense of being not evoked or motivated by anything about an object” (Poellner, Personal Communication, 2002), Dante writes in a letter to Can Grande that the *Commedia* addresses through allegory how “man, through the exercise of free choice, becomes liable to rewarding or punishing justice”. Underpinning Nygren’s understanding of *agape* is 1 John 4:19 “We love because he first loved us” and also 1 John 4: 10: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” In both of these scriptures and according to Nygren agapic love is a gift from God given to man. Inherent in that gift is the ability to choose to love or not to love, which is a necessary condition for love. To force someone to love is not love as love must be voluntary. In this context where God loves first, Dante has the choice to love or not to love in response. Each of these possibilities results in specific consequences as is indicated in Galatians 5. Given this Biblical basis, Nygren’s framework, as modified above, provides an illuminating perspective for the reading of Dante. The tension here noted represents one of the central disputes in Christian thought throughout Church history from the first century to the present, the law versus grace, or salvation by works versus grace, though this subject extends beyond the scope of this thesis.

³⁵ *Eros* involves a lack, while *agape* is absolute fullness. *Eros* therefore concerns a need to fill the self as opposed to *agape* which is absolutely selfless. Augustine used the term *caritas* to express God’s *agape*, this selfless love, which is without the warmth of *phileo* or the intensity of *eros*, in an effort to describe through a term the selfless, feeling and loving nature of God.

triadic pattern of procession and return through love” to that of Christian *caritas*,³⁶ which seems to make “the tradition of *eros* congenial to Christian theology” (Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 77), *eros* does differ significantly from the Augustinian conception of *caritas*, given that the latter brings together *eros* and Christian *agape* (see Nygren, p. 457), a conception later passed on to Dante. This addition of *agape* shows therefore *caritas* to be the *telos* of the *eros* tradition, but a significantly different and higher form of love from *eros* given its contact with and subsequent transformation through *agape*.

3. CONCLUSION

The development of this principal parallel, reinforced by the nine other parallels mentioned, provides a strong case for the transmission of Platonic ideas *via* Plotinus through Augustine into the monastic schools where Dante studied. I have not been concerned to explore which Dominican and Benedictine schools could have transmitted the Augustinian conceptions to Dante as this is the subject for another thesis. What can be relied upon is that Augustinian thought, including these Neo-Platonic ideas, had strongly infiltrated the cultural *milieu* *via* the monastic community; it seems, indeed, to have reached Dante directly through, at least, the *Confessions* and *de Trinitate*.³⁷ Augustine’s presence with St. Bernard in the Celestial Rose (*Paradiso* XXXII) is a fitting emblem of this.

³⁶ “The points of difference concerned, not the reality of such a cyclic movement, but how it took effect. For Christians the *proodos* from God entailed creation in the strict sense, a non-necessary causing of being *ex nihilo* an idea alien to the Greek mind. The *epistrophe* to God entailed Christ, the incarnate Redeemer, a ‘folly to the Greeks.’ Nevertheless, love was for Christianity also—indeed, more emphatically—the principle of both *proodos* and *epistrophe*.” (Foster, “Dante’s Idea of Love”, p. 77)

³⁷ Moore (*Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 291-293) states that the *Convivio* and the *Commedia* seem to suggest knowledge of Augustine’s *Confessions* in language and subject matter, and seem to paraphrase *Confessions* 1. 7. Furthermore *Purgatorio* XXV. 83: *memoria, intelligenza, e volontade*, seems to suggest St. Augustine *de Trinitate* X, 17, 18” among other examples. Moore further refers to Scartazzini who links *Confessions* IV, 16 with *Purgatorio* XXII, 67-69. As these two texts, the *Confessions* and *de Trinitate*, are primarily the texts which have been relied upon to argue for Dante’s exposure to Augustinian thought, this suggests that he may have had direct exposure to Augustinian texts though this cannot be relied upon nor is this direct exposure essential to prove my case. Direct exposure to other Augustinian texts, such as *De Quantitate animae*, can in fact be established (see Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 184).

IX. INFLUENCE THROUGH COURTLY LOVE AND THE TROUBADOURS

The second plausible means by which the Platonic understanding of *eros* may have been transmitted to Dante can be found in the literary tradition, coming down through Ovid into the culture of courtly love and through Troubadour poetry, then making its way through Italian lyric poetry into the work of the poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* of which Dante was one.

1. THE AMBIGUITY OF LOVE

The point of origin in this chain of literary influence relates to the ambiguity of love and the desire of the beloved to form a unified whole with the beloved.¹ As we noted above with regard to the *Symposium* (180E6-181A1; 202D4-203A8) and the *Phaedrus* (243D3-7), questions arose as to the nature of love, whether a god or *daimon*, good or evil, etc. This produced in both dialogues a series of speeches seeking to come to terms with the meaning and significance of love. In Aristophanes' speech (*Symposium* 192D10-E4) the lover desires to be united with the beloved forever, a position which is affirmed but redirected in a non-carnal orientation by Diotima², pointing beyond virtue to the form

¹ It seems likely that certain aspects of Ovid's thought have a Platonic source. The four key points which Plato and Ovid seem have in common are 1. The ambiguity of love (a position supported by Nardi in "*Filosofia dell'Amore*"); 2. *Eros/Amor* as a god (likewise affirmed by Nardi); 3. The desire of the lover to be united with the lover forever; and 4. Consideration of the value of love of the individual. The first two are evident. The irony in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* points up love's ambiguity which we saw in the *Symposium* (180E6-181A1; 202D4-203A8) and the *Phaedrus* (243D3-7). Furthermore, "Ovid creates a mock-religion in *Ars Amatoria* through the worship of the God *Amor*" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 21). The argument concerning the lover's desire to be united eternally with the beloved is explicit (see Barkan, p. 57; *Metamorphoses* IV. 371-8 and III. 415-32). With regard to love of the individual compare *Ars Amatoria* II. 721-722 with *Phaedrus* 251A-C. "For the notion that the spark which kindles passion strikes the admirer in the eye and from there penetrates deeper, see the graphic description in Plato's *Phaedrus* 251A-C" (Fraenkel, *Ovid; a poet between two worlds*, p. 216, note 48). (For further similarities see Tissol, *The Face of Nature: concerning rhetoric*, p. 51-2, and writing p. 46-8.) An exploration as to how these features were indirectly transmitted from Plato to Ovid extends beyond the scope of this thesis.

² In Socrates' speech (*Symposium* 201B2-4) love desires the beauty (and goodness) which it lacks, and as Diotima declares that (206A9) "Love is wanting to possess the good forever".

of beauty, thus demonstrating the existence of two forms of love (208E3-209A4), indicating Love's ambiguity.

This Platonic tendency³ reemerges in Latin literature in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VI, 371-8. Due to Salmacis' love for Hermaphodites,⁴ she prays, "May no day ever come that shall separate him from me or me from him....[following which] their two bodies, joined together as they were merged into one," forming the Aristophanic unity "with one face and form for both" (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 377-8)⁵ Evident in this notion of love is a desire for wholeness with the beloved, yet when this conception of love is explored by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* concerning Hermaphroditus he is being ironic and cutting, as he is also in the case of Narcissus, indicating that he has made a distinction between good and bad love, the irony being evidence of Love's ambiguity.

This irony is particularly apparent in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. In this "manual for seducers", Ovid is joking and being fully ironic concerning romantic love through encouraging that it be taken seriously, which in turn like Aristophanes' speech stresses the ridiculousness of man's carnal appetites.⁶ The irony lies in that while mocking inappropriate prioritization of carnal love simultaneously it negatively affirms the underlying truth of a deep need in man for wholeness, visible when man in his need turns for fulfillment to love relationships, though these can not fully satisfy. Herein lies the

³ Barkan (p. 57) affirms this is a Platonic tendency when he writes, "above all, the act of love itself, as Platonists from Plato to Spenser have understood, blurs distinctions by transforming the lovers into a hermaphrodite", after which he cites *Metamorphoses* IV, 371-72, as his prime example, indicating that this tendency is demonstrated in Ovid.

⁴ This desire for fullness emphasizes a lack in the lover, pointing to Socrates' speech of *Symposium* 200E9-201A1. Fraenkel (p. 218 note 59) contrasts the "novelty" of Plato maintaining love as lack as in the *Symposium* with Ovid where the object of love issues forth love; cf. *Symposium* 199 and *Metamorph.* 3, 372-4 (the beloved "burning for a nearer flame"). However Ovid's position in this context is more in keeping with *Phaedrus* 255 whereby beauty radiates from the beloved entering the eyes of the lover which is then communicated back to the beloved forming a cycle of love, a position which Fraenkel discusses on p. 216 with regard to *Phaedrus* 251. However in Ovid, though beauty may issue forth as a form of love producing love in the spectator, it likewise indicates a lack of wholeness which the lover desires to fill; for example Salmacis "longed to possess what she saw" (*Metamorphoses* IV, 316), which therefore in Ovid remains an essential aspect of love.

⁵ This ironization of the Aristophanic unity is also found in the Narcissus myth of *Metamorphoses* III, 415-17, 425-432. Barkan (p. 57) notes this when he writes, "Ovid plays on Narcissus' hopeless inseparability from his beloved; here he creates of two people a single image".

⁶ Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* "presupposes an audience to whom love is one of the minor peccadilloes of life, and the joke consists in treating it seriously—in writing a treatise, with rules and examples *en regle* for the nice conduct of illicit love" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 6). It is both a "comic confession of the depths to which this ridiculous appetite may bring a man" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 7) as well as a lesson in the art of seduction. That he did not take it seriously is shown in that he wrote "*Remedium Amoris* to set against the *Ars amatoris*" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 43).

inherent ambiguity of love, a point which Socrates, when discussing the tendency to elevate carnal love over virtuous love, had effectively addressed and critiqued through Diotima's correction of Aristophanes' speech through the ladder to the Form of the Beautiful. This, likewise, indicated that though love can be good and evil (its value determined by the object towards which it is directed, whether a carnal object or a spiritual virtuous object), true fulfillment is found only in the virtuous non-physical object.

Ovid was misunderstood in the Middle Ages within the tradition of courtly love⁷ in which his work is taken so seriously⁸ that a "sensual experience" associated with romantic love "took on...a salutary aspect".⁹ Though Lewis in part convincingly argues that Ovid is not the source of courtly love,¹⁰ it nonetheless reinforced a certain reading of

⁷ Though Ovid has been misread what is of consequence is that he can be misread, underlining the inherent ambiguity of love with its potential for an ironic conflict of values, a point of which Ovid seems well aware.

⁸ "The very same conduct which Ovid ironically recommends could be recommended seriously in the courtly tradition" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 7) and embraced within the courts (though not in the Church).

⁹ "What was problematic was its reception in the Christian-courtly circles of medieval France and Provence; for love, though still a sensual experience, took on now, in keeping with its new circumstances, a salutary aspect." (Took, *Lyric Poet*, p. 1)

¹⁰ Scholars have tried to determine the origin of this type of poetic sentiment. Took (*Lyric Poet*, p. 1) believes the origin of the ambiguity of the conception of love prevalent in the tradition of courtly love finds its origins in Ovid. Symonds thinks that through contact with Arabian civilization, "the consequence of this collision was the addition of a certain Oriental quality to the sterner ideal of knighthood, rooted already in Teutonic Christianity. The extravagant warmth of feeling which we find in Troubadour poetry has a perfume of the East. The worship of women, which was something almost religious in the North, loses much of its mystery, and acquires a new voluptuousness in Southern Europe...[exemplified in] the Provençal lyrics" (Symonds, *An Introduction to Dante*, p. 264). Expanding on the notion of an Arabic influence through which there is a Neo-Platonic influence, Shaw writes, "it appeared first in Provençal poetry because the south of France was accessible to notions belonging to Arabic Neo-Platonism, which were prevalent among the Moors, particularly the notion of the peculiarly elevating value of sexual desire as long as it remains unappeased. This idea that a passion for a woman is refined and ennobling in as far as it can be separated from the satisfaction of sensual appetite appealed to all those who were already conscious of a kind of love superior to that of the common crowd. It made no difference that the social position of women among the Arabs was even lower than her position in the ancient and early mediaeval world, for she occupied a comparatively exalted station in the homogenous feudal society of southern France, and it was natural to transfer to the lover the well-recognized virtues of chivalry, especially that of devoted loyalty to the lord or lady" (Shaw, 104-5).

In contrast to Took, Symonds and Shaw, Lewis believes that "the efforts of scholars have so far failed to find an origin for the content of Provençal love poetry. Celtic, Byzantine and even Arab influences have been suspected; but it has not been made clear that these, if granted, could account for the results we see. A more promising theory attempts to trace the whole thing to Ovid; but this view—apart from the inadequacy which I have suggested above—finds itself faced with the fatal difficulty that the evidence points to a much stronger Ovidian influence in the north of France than in the south...The crusading armies thought the Provençals milksops, but this will seem relevant only to a very hardened enemy of *Frauendienst*. We know that this period in the south of France had witnessed what seemed to contemporaries a signal degeneracy from the simplicity of the ancient manners and an alarming increase in

Ovid and his conception of love¹¹ with significant resemblance to a Platonic conception of love which, as we noted in the first section of Part 2, was already of great concern in the monastic culture of the time.

Courtly love¹² shares similar concerns with Platonism in that it, while maintaining Love's ambiguity, affirms the desire for unity with the beloved. Courtly love involves the opposition of two types of love, both of which desire wholeness through the possession

luxury [Jeanroy, tom. I, p. 83]. But what age and what land, by testimony, has not? Much more important is the fact that landless knighthood—knighthood without a place in the territorial hierarchy of feudalism—seems to have been possible in Provence [Faurel, tom. I, p. 515]. The unattached knight, as we meet him in the romances, respectable only by his valour, amiable only by his own courtesy, predestined lover of other men's wives, was therefore a reality; but this does not explain why he loved in such a new way. If courtly love necessitated adultery, adultery hardly necessitated courtly love. We come much nearer to the secret if we accept the picture of a typical Provencal court...a castle which is a little island of comparative leisure and luxury, and therefore at least possible refinement, in a barbarous country-side". With many men but "few women—the lady and her damsels...Whatever 'courtesy' is in the place flows from her: all female charm from her and her damsels. There is no question of marriage for most of the court. All these circumstances together come very near to being a 'cause'; but they do not explain why very similar conditions elsewhere had to wait for Provencal example before they produced like results. Some part of the mystery remains inviolate" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 12).

¹¹ Given that Ovid is "certainly most influential [of the ancient writers] in the Middle Ages" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 5), though perhaps not its immediate source, he acts as a reinforcement. Lewis' objection (*Allegory*, p. 7) to "Ovid misunderstood" as the source of courtly love is that "the Middle Ages misunderstand him so consistently." As Lewis (*Allegory*, p. 43) writes, "I have endeavoured to point out above that 'Ovid misunderstood' explains nothing until we have accounted for a consistent misunderstanding in a particular direction". Though not accounting for the origin perhaps, the culture associated with the medieval feudal setting seems to have encouraged and reinforced this specific reading of Ovid and its resulting view of love.

¹² Courtly love came to fruition in the Troubadour poetry of Provence in Languedoc in the eleventh century, and was centred upon unfulfilled desire. "Courtly poetry...makes desire itself the essential motif, and so creates a conception of love with a negative ground-note." (Huizinga, p. 104; also see Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 9) The "characteristics [of which] may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love. The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady's lightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim. There is a service of love closely modelled on the service which a feudal vassal owes to his lord. The lover is the lady's 'man'. He addresses her as *midons*, which etymologically represents not 'my lady' but 'my lord'. [Jeanroy, *La poésie lyrique des Troubadours*, tom. I, p. 91 n.] The whole attitude has been rightly described as 'a feudalisation of love.' [Wechsler, *Das Kulturproblem des Minnesangs*, 1909, Bnd. I, p. 177]... It is possible only to those who are, in the old sense of the word, polite...[distinguishing] the gentle from the *vilein*: only the courteous can love, but it is love that makes them courteous. Yet this love, though neither playful nor licentious in its expression, is always what the nineteenth century called 'dishonourable' love. The poet addresses another man's wife, and the situation is so carelessly accepted that he seldom concerns himself much with her husband; his real enemy is the rival." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 2-3)

The poet/lover uses, as in the case of Dante, the vernacular so that she can understand. As Dante writes in the *Vita Nuova*; "The reason why certain of a very mean sort obtained at the first some fame as poets is, that before them no man had written verses in the language of Si; and of these the first was moved to the writing of such verses by the wish to make himself understood by a certain lady, unto whom Latin poetry was difficult. This thing is against such as rhyme concerning other matters than love; that mode of speech having been first used for the expression of love alone". (Cited in Symonds, *An Introduction to Dante*, p. 278)

of their object; *fino amor* and *fol amor*. *Fino amor* directed towards virtue necessitates the absence of physical union. However, “based on the notion of the lover’s feudal service to ‘midons’ (Italian ‘madonna’), his lady, [the lover]... expects a ‘guerdon’ (Italian ‘guiderdone’), or reward” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 14) indicating that love though supposedly “morally improving” (Took, *Lyric Poet*, p. 1)¹³ and intended as non-physical in its ideal form, remaining a state of unsatisfied desire, often degenerates into adultery, thereby becoming a “social evil” (Symonds, “The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love”, p. 66). This explains the split into two loves; *fino amor* which is morally improving¹⁴ non-physical love of an ideal which seems closer to heavenly *eros* though involving the idealization and adoration of a mortal woman¹⁵ (see Boyde, p. 280 and Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 9)¹⁶ degenerates to *fol amor*, carnal lust directed at physical pleasure, similar to earthly *eros*. However this degeneration is inevitable precisely as courtly love overemphasizes the love of the individual as an end in itself which blocks transcendence towards what is truly virtuous and the Lady is elevated above God. Nonetheless, given this concern of the lover to be

¹³ “Without giving up all connection with sensual love, the new poetic ideal was capable of embracing all kinds of ethical aspirations. Love now became the field where all moral and cultural perfection flowered. Because of his love the courtly lover is pure and virtuous. The spiritual element dominates more and more, till towards the end of the thirteenth century, the *dolce stil nuovo* of Dante and his friends ends by attributing to love the gift of bringing about a state of piety and holy intuition.” (Huizinga, p. 104)

¹⁴ According to Capellanus (I. iv; ed. Walsh, p. 39), “The effect of love is that no greed can cheapen the true lover. Love makes the hirsute barbarian as handsome as can be: it can even enrich the lowest born with nobility of manners: usually it even endows with humility the arrogant. A person in love grows to the practice of performing numerous services becomingly to all. What a remarkable thing is love, for it invests a man with such shining virtues, and there is no one whom it does not instruct to have these great and good habits in plenty!”

¹⁵ Shaw thinks the reverence or idolization of women as a “potentiality of such an emotion belongs to human nature. It is not because of anything he has read or has been taught”. (Shaw, p. 103) Symonds (“The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love” p. 61) sees this as abnormal (“Greek love and chivalrous love form two extraordinary and exceptional phases of psychological experience”), while Lewis (*Allegory*, p. 3) sees it as “a special state of affairs, which will probably have an end, and which certainly had a beginning in eleventh-century Provence...(that love should be regarded as a noble and ennobling passion)”. “The reverent yearning for the idealized feminine persists as long as it is not overwhelmed by the growth of sensual appetite. A striking example is Dante who never forgot the ‘*fiamma di caritate*’ which used to invade him whenever he was hoping for the greeting of Beatrice. [NV, XI] It seems to me that this natural potentiality is too little considered by scholars in their search for the causes of the ideal quality of love in the poetry of the troubadours.” (Shaw, p. 104) Shaw seems the more convincing as without this potential both Troubadours and the Platonic ascent to the form of the Good would have been impossible. “Idealized love for woman has become the chief subject of all literature not only because the Provençals first made it conspicuous in literature, but also because it has always been latent in the hearts of men.” (Shaw, p. 104; also see Freud, “Debasement in the Sphere of Love”.)

¹⁶ “The goal of such lovers was not a brief shudder of the loins in bodily union, but a permanent state of bliss resulting from an ‘*unimento spirituale*’, a ‘marriage of true *minds*.’” (Boyde, p. 280)

unified with the beloved, in which love is determined by its object resulting in the opposition of two loves, one virtue based and the other carnal, indicating the ambiguity of Love and concern for the individual as an object of love, we note a resemblance to Platonism.

This brings us to the question of the influence of Platonism on courtly love. While Symonds argues that courtly love owes nothing to Platonism,¹⁷ he goes into great detail demonstrating the similarities between the Platonic notion of love and the conception of courtly love as transmitted to Dante.¹⁸ Singer on the other hand has fewer doubts: "When the northern tradition of courtly love supplemented the NeoPlatonism of the troubadours with Ovidian ideas about adultery and sexual freedom, the danger to ecclesiastical doctrine was obvious". (Singer, p. 364) Singer suggests that Neo-Platonism, as discussed in the previous section, was part of the culture of the Troubadours, but that a conflict arose with regard to the influx of the immoral ideas from Ovid which tainted the moral Neo-Platonic culture of the Troubadours. It is noticeable that the Ovidian tendency (whether or not misunderstood) brings with it concerns as to Love's ambiguity and the lover's desire for wholeness with the beloved which is in keeping with Plato of the *Symposium*. Furthermore, Troubadour poetry places emphasis on love of the individual and the divinity of *Eros*, itself suggestive of certain strains of Platonism deriving from the *Phaedrus*.¹⁹ Whether the Platonic influence upon the Troubadours came through the Neo-Platonists or was transmitted through Ovid makes little difference, indeed the influence may well have come from both. What is of consequence is that the Troubadours were

¹⁷ "We have no reason to suppose that feudal chivalry owed anything to Platonic influences, even in this its latest manifestation." (Symonds. "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 30)

¹⁸ See Symonds' *Introduction to the Study of Dante* and "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love". In these Symonds pushes their similarities to the point that he defines the two as being "psychologically rare to the point of calling them abnormalities," "two brief moments, once at Athens and once at Florence, when amorous enthusiasms of an abnormal type presented themselves to natures of the noblest stamp as indispensable conditions of the progress of the soul upon the pathway toward perfection". (Symonds, "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 31) Mazzeo (*Structure and Thought*, p. 139) comments that "as good a critic as John Addington Symonds...was unable to accept the Platonic and Dantesque ideals of love as anything other than abnormal attitudes". He criticizes the view of Symonds expressed in "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", (p. 55-86) by stating "Symonds is not clear concerning the speculative and moral attitude both Dante and Plato assumed in regard to their respective love traditions. Neither Dante nor Plato ignored the social context in which *Eros* and "amore" were imbedded, but both emphasized the metaphysical and personal aspects of love". (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 203-204)

¹⁹ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 167.

strongly influenced by Platonic ideas and this emerged in their poetry, particularly in their concern for the nature of love.

2. *AMOR AND CARITAS*

This concern is expressed through the struggle of the Troubadours with Christianity. Not surprisingly a conflict arose as the Medieval Christian culture worshipped the Christian God of love (God as *caritas*) while the Troubadours and poets of courtly love, though following the pagan god *Amor* of courtly love, considered themselves to be Christian (see Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 23). For this reason, “at the heart of troubadour poetry is an unresolved tension between the poet-lover’s allegiance to the lady and his allegiance to God” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 14-5).²⁰ While the poet knew God, as creator and *caritas*, deserved undivided and the highest reverence, he chose to love the *domina* as master “without reference [or subordination] to God.”²¹ For this reason though directed upward and focused upon virtue, the worship of the Lady became a form of idolatry leading the poet astray.²²

²⁰ “Some antagonism naturally existed between the chivalry of religion and the chivalry of Love....The Crusades, by developing a deeply religious spirit, and setting martyrdom in the Holy Land before the souls of knights and warriors as an object to be devoutly desired, put a sword between the Love of God and the Love of the Lady.” (Symonds, *An Introduction to Dante*, p. 257)

²¹ This conflict was inevitable because “in his ‘philosophy’ the troubadour found no place for Christian love as such...within Troubadour ideology there is no place for an object of love higher than the lady; whereas in the Christian, not only can there be no object of love higher than God but all other loves must show subordination to love of Him. The trouble was precisely that the troubadour could always forget to acknowledge that subordination for his love of *domina* was without reference to God” (Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”, p. 63-4) as she was master and allowed none higher. When considered with respect to the god *Amor*, “It was also to the greater glory of the God of Love that *domina* should be extolled; for this, the God would no doubt cause reward to be made to his faithful servant. The result could not have been other than it was: this love of woman which the poets sang was necessarily without subordination to God” (Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”, p. 63-4). Thus in a greater sense than in the *Symposium*, though like the *Phaedrus*, love of the individual is highly valued. “As early as Plato’s *Phaedrus*, one finds descriptions of lovers prepared to fall down and worship the beloved as if in the presence of a god” (Singer, Vol. II. p. 152). Yet in contrast with both dialogues in relation to the forms, love of the individual seems to be placed above the love of God.

²² The Christian poets’ adherence to courtly love indicates sin, idolatry, a “straying from the path which could lead to the peace of Heaven” (Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”, p. 64-65). As in heavenly *eros* the poet looked upward “towards heaven”, so the *domina* is above him (a tendency which “seems, as the tradition grows older, increasingly higher and higher above, until finally she begins to resemble an angel”), inspiring virtue by her very name. “Being always higher, she ought always to lead to higher things...and as *domina* she must be the last and only object of desire in her poet-lover’s upward gaze. How might he dare look beyond her? The little closed world of this kind of love did not allow for such irreverence. Yet, as every troubadour knew, beyond and further up was God”. (Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*” p. 68)

Thus the notion of *fino amor*, of courtly love, while containing the values of chivalry, many of which were derived from Christianity (see Boyde, p. 280 and Symonds, "Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 73)²³ through making its own culture, an "alternative culture" (Boyde, p. 280), worked against Christian values²⁴ and to some extent parodied Christianity.²⁵ This resulted in the production of poetry tainted with

²³ "Chivalry had absorbed and organized not only a large portion of the Christian but also a large portion of the old Teutonic spirit. The unselfishness, humility, forgiveness of injuries, indifference to worldly wealth, the chastity and purity of love which formed ingredients of the chivalrous ideal were Christian. The adoration of women, love of battles and of feats of arms for their own sake, the scrupulous sense of honour, the obedience to laws, the truthfulness and loyalty to persons, the respect for knighthood as a form of consecration,—all these no less essential elements of chivalry, were Teutonic." (Symonds, *An Introduction to Dante*, p. 261-2)

²⁴ Through providing an alternative culture, though sounding 'high minded' and derived from Christianity, courtly love worked against Christian values. (Symonds, "Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 78) First, regardless of spiritual aspirations, "the goal of the chivalric lover is usually to win his lady fully. His love is not 'platonic' or exclusively a wishful dream; he expects to realize it physically. But he recognizes, as such, its great power that can move him to good and evil. Often he perceives it as a danger as well as delight, and even in the romances where that love is idealized, the destructive element is always present" (Shapiro, *Women Earthly and Divine*, p. 98). Secondly, in order to understand this, we must realize that in this period, as "marriage had nothing to do with love" but basically economics, "any idealization of sexual love, in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian, must begin by being an idealization of adultery" (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 13). "Where marriage does not depend upon the free will of the married, any theory which takes love for a noble form of experience must be a theory of adultery." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 37) This is further intensified by the fact that passionate love/*eros* was considered evil/sinful by the medieval church fathers whether outside or inside marriage. "Andreas repeatedly recognizes this. '*Amorem exhibere est graviter offendere deum.*' Marriage offers no compromise. It is a mistake to suppose that the *vehemens amator* can escape *sine crimine* by the impropriety (from the courtly point of view) of loving his own wife. Such a man is in *propria uxore adulter*. His sin is heavier than that of the unmarried lover, for he has abused the sacrament of marriage. And that is precisely why the whole world of courtesy exists only by leaving the religious side of the question out for a moment. Once bring that in, as the lover argues in the same passage, and you must give up, not only loving *par amours*, but the whole world as well..... 'No man through any good deeds can please God so long as he serves in the service of Love' [*Quum igitur omnia sequantur ex amore nefanda*]." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 41) Given this view of the rift in the medieval mind caused by the economic view of marriage, and further the prohibition of passion which is in marriage viewed as a greater sin in that it "abuses the sacrament of marriage", it is not surprising that adultery and subversive love were idealized. Consequently, for Francesca who imbibed the doctrines of courtly love wholeheartedly, it is not surprising that she justified herself by *Amor* and saw her passionate love for Paolo as a lesser sin, and furthermore did not fully recognize her sin as her whole value system conflicted with medieval Christian values.

²⁵ When the Love religion of the god *Amor* opposes the Christian religion, it can operate through parody. "This erotic religion arises as a rival or a parody of the real religion and emphasizes the antagonism of the two ideals." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 18) As "the worship of the god *Amor* has been a mock-religion in Ovid's *Art of Love*, ...the Ovidian tradition, operated upon by the medieval taste for humorous blasphemy...[producing] a love religion, and even in a sense a Christianized love religion", parodies medieval Christianity. "As against any theory which would derive medieval *Frauendienst* from Christianity and the worship of the Blessed Virgin, we must insist that the love religion often begins as a parody of the real religion. This does not mean that it may not soon become something more serious than a parody, nor even that it may not, as in Dante, find a *modus vivendi* with Christianity and produce a noble fusion of sexual and religious experience. But it does mean that we must be prepared for a certain ambiguity in all those poems where the attitude of the lover to his lady or to Love looks at first sight most like the attitude

lust reflecting a rebellion against Christian doctrines²⁶ which, as Dante demonstrates in *Purgatorio* XXVI, was capable of leading people astray.

3. THE POETICS OF RECANTATION

Rather than seeing God as the ultimate end and good of the soul, the poet of courtly love knowingly violated Christian ethics and his conscience (Singleton, "From Love to *Caritas*", p. 68), worshipping a temporal woman. Having recognized themselves to have violated their consciences some of the poets were struck with remorse, which eventually resulted in a pattern whereby "recantation even became a part of the tradition" (Singleton, "From Love to *Caritas*", p. 65).²⁷ This poetics of recantation has affinities

of the worshipper to the Blessed Virgin or to God...Where it is not a parody of the Church it may be, in a sense, her rival—a temporary escape, a truancy from the ardours of a religion that was believed in to the delights of a religion that was merely imagined. To describe it as the revenge of Paganism on her conquerors would be to exaggerate; but to think of it as a direct colouring of human passions by religious emotion would be a far graver error. It is as if some lover's metaphor when he said 'Here is my heaven' in a moment of passionate abandonment were taken up and expanded into a system. Even while he speaks he knows that 'here' is not his real heaven; and yet it is a delightful audacity to develop the idea further. If you go on to add to that lover's 'heaven' its natural accessories, a god and saints and a list of commandments, and if you picture the lover praying, sinning, repenting, and finally admitted to bliss, you will find yourself in the precarious dream-world of medieval love poetry." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 21-22)

²⁶ This conflict between the values of courtly love and Christianity resulted in subversive love poetry, poetry tainted with lust. "The general impression left on the medieval mind by its official teachers was that all love—at least all such passionate and exalted devotion as a courtly poet thought worthy of the man—was more or less wicked. And this impression, combining with the nature of feudal marriage as I have already described it, produced in the poets a certain willfulness, a readiness to emphasize rather than to conceal the antagonism between their amatory and their religious ideals. Thus if the Church tells them that the ardent lover even of his own wife is in mortal sin, they presently reply with the rule that true love is impossible in marriage. If the Church says that the sexual act can be 'excused' only by the desire for offspring, then it becomes the mark of a true lover, like Chauntecleer, that he served Venus 'More for delyt than world to multiplie.' [*Cant. Tales*, B 4535] This cleavage between Church and court...is the most striking feature of medieval sentiment." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 17-18) For this reason, regardless of its notions of higher love, *fino amor*, Troubadour poetry and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* are, due to their subject matter, "tainted with 'lussuria,'" (Boyde, p. 290)

²⁷ "There is no better example of this inevitable final turning from love of woman to love of God than what a famous 'theologian' of courtly love wrote toward the end of his *Art of Love*. In the first two books of his work, Andreas Capellanus gives a most detailed course of instruction in that art to a young friend named Walter (and what an amazing course it is!). But then comes the time, at the beginning of the third book, when he feels that he must admonish his pupil as follows: 'You should know that we did not do this because we consider it advisable for you or any other man to fall in love, but for fear lest you might think us stupid; we believe though that any man who devotes his efforts to love loses all his usefulness. Read this little book, then, not as one seeking to take up the life of a lover, but that, invigorated by the theory and trained to excite the minds of women to love, you may, by refraining from so doing, win an eternal recompense and thereby deserve a greater reward from God. For God is more pleased with a man who is able to sin and does not than with a man who has no opportunity to sin...' At least one third of the troubadours in the south of France are reported to have turned to the cloister and to God in their last years--

with Plato's *Phaedrus* when Socrates at the beginning of his second speech confesses that he has sinned against the god of love. Analogously, though with the striking difference that Socrates' sin was to speak against Love rather than advocate a false love, the Troubadour poets acknowledge that in following *Amor*, the false god of love or the false god of inferior love, they sinned against the true God of Love, the Christian God who is *caritas*. Here recantation becomes Biblical repentance, the repentance of *amor* for *caritas*, a bad view of love for a good one, a recantation which is central to our discussion of Dante as with Plato.

The development of Italian lyric poetry in Italy culminating in Dante sharpens the parallel with the *Phaedrus*. This culture of courtly love infused with the Platonic questioning of the nature of love, the divinity of *Eros/Amor* and the high value of the love of the individual, all of which are attributes of the *Phaedrus*, was expressed through the poetry of the Troubadours. This in turn was transplanted in the thirteenth century into Italy forming the Italian lyrical tradition²⁸ where it likewise created a context in the Sicilian and Tuscan schools for the inquiry into the nature of love.²⁹ The poetry of its leader, Lentini Notaro is characterized by "a constant questioning about the nature of Love, rather than a concern for the erotic vicissitudes of the poet or his beloved, who often seem mere pretexts for philosophical soul-searching." (Brand and Pertile,

and it does not much matter if this be only legend; the substantial pattern of the matter is still there, even in the rumor. (We find it in Chaucer and in Gower and in Juan Ruiz in Spain.)...In one form or another repentance did come to be a part of the tradition of courtly love." (Singleton, "From Love to *Caritas*", p. 65-6)

²⁸ "Italian lyric tradition...had its roots in the Provençal poetry nourished by the rivalling courts of twelfth-century southern France. The conventions of troubadour love poetry...were successfully transplanted to the court of Frederick II of Palermo" (Barolini, "Dante and the Lyric Past", p. 14), the *Magna curia* (Great court) of Frederick Hohenstaufen, "as only one amongst many competing forms of expression" (Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 9). The *Magna curia* "became the capital of the first group of Italian vernacular lyric poets, the so-called Sicilian School". (Barolini, "Dante and the Lyric Past", p. 14) Scholars consider this tradition of lyric poetry to have improved in Italy through having passed into the hands of a "nobler race of poets" who introduced "a grave and metaphysical turn of thought". (Symonds, *An Introduction to Dante*, pp. 265-278; "A nation of scholars and of doctors—Dante calls the poets of his school *dottori*—men who were not knights or squires." Symonds, "Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 79)

²⁹ In "*Filosofia del' Amore*" Nardi discusses how Mostacci believed love was either a cruel or benevolent god, Lord or Tyrant yet cannot be personalized as he is a god. Piero della Vigne responds that love is in a visible form but is an invisible force. Cappellano thinks love is a passion, excessive imagination, and emphasizes the manners of the lover who becomes chaste. He emphasizes an inner beauty over birth. Le Notero responds to Mostacci saying love is a passion of the heart which he relates to Aristotelianism. The lover experiences pleasure and delectation through the face of the beloved. (Nardi, "*Filosofia dell'Amore*", pp. 1-19)

Cambridge History, p. 12)³⁰ In opposition to the Sicilian poetry of “sorrowing [and] sighing”, the Tuscan school took a moral stance, Guittone therein offering an example of the reemergence of a poetry of recantation following the pattern of the Troubadours.³¹ He focused upon ethics, morality and moderation hence resembling Socrates’ first speech, articulated through Ferrari’s reading of the white horse in Socrates’ second speech of the *Phaedrus*.³² These poets of Sicilian and Tuscan schools in turn were stylistically reacted against by the poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* who were the great influences upon Dante, Cavalcanti and Guinizzelli in particular. As Nardi (“*Filosofia dell’ Amore*”, p. 19) writes,

³⁰ “The ‘leader’ (or ‘caposcula’) of the Sicilian School was Giacomo da Lentini [the Notary, *Purg.* 24]” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 14; also Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 12). His poetry exemplified the Sicilian tradition focusing upon the erotic “not in the contingencies of love, in its time, place, and circumstances, but in its condition, in the experience of seeing, sorrowing, sighing, and rejoicing” (Took, *Lyric Poet*, p. 2).

³¹ “The Tuscans, by contrast, mainland successors to the Sicilians, took a moral line [as compared to what Took calls the Sicilian “hedonism”]...Love is a good thing, liable in the right-thinking citizen to inculcate the virtues of patience, perseverance and self-discipline” (Took, *Lyric Poet*, p. 3) as exemplified by Guittone and Bonagiunta. The poetry of Guittone is criticized as being “mere artifice [see Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, pp. 15-18]...a blind acceptance of the instructions as adequate, [showing] quite clearly how little [he was]... concerned with any genuine emotion.” In *Purgatorio*, Guittone is grouped with Le Notero and Bonagiunta as representatives of the old style against which advocates of the new style, the members of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, react. Bonagiunta admits that they could not like Dante transcribe love directly when he states “Now I see...the knot which held back the Notary, Guittone and he from reaching the sweet new style which I hear” (*Purgatorio*, XXIV, 55-57).

“Guittone continued to elaborate his peculiarly ingenious and obscure love poetry until his religious conversion, after which he refused to have anything more to do with sexual love.” (Shaw, p. 106) Guittone underwent a religious conversion, and “in about 1265 abandoned a wife and three children to enter the lay Franciscan order of the Milites Beatae Virginis Mariae (Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary), popularly nicknamed the ‘Fрати gaudenti’ (Jovial Friars)” (Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, p. 15). The conversion marks the transition “from love poetry to moral and ethical poetry, and even to the religious lauds to honour St. Francis and St. Dominic” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 15-8). Therefore, “Guittone’s literary output...tends to be classified according to this watershed in his life, with one half conventionally lyrical (Guittone), and the other moralistic and spiritual (Fra Guittone)” (Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 15). Following his conversion, particularly due to the medieval doctrinal view of sex and passion, Guittone’s poems at times envision love as *mania* and negative—“Now that I completely flee love and do not want it, and more than anything else find it hateful...for in all parts where Love seizes madness is king, in place of wisdom...[Instead] make God... [my] star...for neither great honour nor great good have been acquired by following carnal desire”, partially reminiscent of Socrates’ first speech in the *Phaedrus*. “Guittone is thus the first Italian poet to trace in his career a trajectory like that of Dante’s (albeit without the epic dimension), and to embrace in his lyrics issues as diverse as the nature of love, in both its secular and divine manifestations, the moral code, with its virtues and vices, and the vicissitudes of Aretine and Florentine politics.” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 15-8)

³² “Thematically, a bourgeois ethic comes to play, as the poet, following his rejection of the troubadour equation between Love and true worth, exhorts us to pursue civic morality and virtuous moderation: although he tells us on the one hand to reject carnal desire...., he does not tell us on the other to embrace monastic contemplation. The Guittonian ideal is...an honoured position in the community and a wisdom conceived in terms less metaphysical than practical and ethical” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 18), hence like the white horse in Plato’s *Phaedrus*.

“Considering love as a passion as defined by Capellanus and Notaro these poets could only develop the doctrine of love in two ways: 1) by accentuating its violent and irrational character, 2) or by accentuating the imaginary element with artistic and moral catharsis of love as with Guido Guinizzelli.” For Cavalcanti “love [is] irrational, indeed destructive” (Took, *Lyric Poet*, p. 4)³³ In contrast, Guinizzelli³⁴ represents a positive ideal form of love, a pure contemplation of beauty³⁵ which is ennobling.³⁶ In Guinizzelli, the struggle between courtly love and Christianity comes into the foreground seeking resolution, though this is only accomplished in Dante.³⁷ He, however, does bring

³³ His poetry therefore expresses a “tragic...pervasive sense of conflict. On the one hand stands the possibility of understanding, abstraction, imagination and contemplation issuing in a state of pure consciousness...on the other hand stands love, invasive, ineluctable, and inducing in the lover a deep sense of helplessness as he witnesses his own spiritual disintegration” (Took, *Lyric Poet*, p. 5), suggesting the opposition of reason *versus* passion/the irrational, which we will discuss in terms of Francesca. Shaw (pp. 119-123) argues that Cavalcanti is a realist facing the temporality of love; Cavalcanti’s lover pursues his ideal which reveals itself momentarily in different women, yet the recognition of the temporality of his ideal and therefore the finitude of love causes the lover to be heartbroken, thereby causing death.

³⁴ Guinizzelli of Bologna, admirer and imitator of Guittone differed from him in that he “really felt the love that most of the others merely wrote about” (Shaw, p. 106).

³⁵ “The flower and fruit of the desire which the poet would like to pick are nothing else than a glance full of pity and of benevolence of the beloved women of whom he asks nothing else than to pay his service with a smile.” (Nardi, “*Filosofia dell’Amore*”, p. 19)

³⁶ His “repeated assertions that only the noble are capable of love, that nobility is a product of virtue and not of heredity, that the influence of the lady is ennobling, are taken seriously.” (Shaw, p. 106)

³⁷ “All this vindication of pure, that is, unsensual love and of the elevating influence of the lady, is directed against the prejudiced opinion of philosophers, churchmen, and worldly scoffers, for whom sexual love can only be carnal. That apparent incompatibility between ideal love for a woman and philosophical and religious doctrine on love, which had bothered previous poets so little, was a *serious problem* for Guinizzelli. In the last stanza of the canzone he imagines himself before the judgement seat of God who is accusing him of comparing ‘*vano amor*’, love for a woman, to love for Him and the Virgin. All he can say in his defense is: ‘This woman was no ordinary woman: she seemed like an angel of Thy kingdom: it was no fault of mine if I set my heart on her.’ He had loved her with the good love that is peculiar to the gentle heart, a love similar to that which is properly directed to God and the Virgin, a religious love. He has no solution to the problem, no defense, only an excuse, but he is sure that his love is good, and his deep sincerity distinguishes him from the many poets who had used the same excuse lightly.” (Shaw, p. 107; my emphasis) However concerning the concluding sentence, “She had the appearance of an angel who came from Your kingdom. No sin is imputable to me if I loved her”, Singleton (“From Love to *Caritas*”, pp. 69-70) rightly writes, “But can we accept this as a sufficient reply to God? Is this any solution? In short, is the poet right or is God right? Should we not rather observe that Guinizzelli has deliberately ended his poem with an ambiguity? He has refused at the end to take sides. The very point, the conceit of his poem is to present the conflict without solution”. Furthermore while Nardi believes that Guinizzelli succeeds in resolving the conflict between courtly love and Christianity as shown when he writes “hence the lover feels no guilt as a Christian of such feeling” (“*Filosofia dell’Amore*”, p. 19), Singleton (“From Love to *Caritas*”, p. 68-71) is correct in saying that “the so-called *donna angelicata*, the lady-made-angel, of the lyric poetry being written before and in Dante’s time in Italy did not bring in herself the solution to the conflict between troubadour love and Christian love, as some historians of literature would seem to suggest, [giving] the credit for the solution... to [Guinizzelli’s]... famous song, ‘Love and the Gentle Heart.’” This conflict is only brought to a kind of resolution in Dante.

theology and poetry together in the worship and desire of the beautiful, thus yoking philosophy and theology to *eros*, which is the subject of Bonagiunta's criticism of him.³⁸

4. RESOLVING THE AMBIGUITY

In Dante we see the fruitfulness of “the yoking of philosophy—indeed Theology—to *Eros*...a conjoining that would effectively dissolve the impasse that drove troubadour poetry and give rise to a theologized courtly love, epitomized by the figure of Dante's Beatrice, the lady who does not separate from God but leads him to God.” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 19) Like the divine nature of *Eros* in Socrates' second speech of the *Phaedrus* and its role as *daimon* in the *Symposium*, Beatrice acts as the divinely sent love, *caritas*, which acts as a guide to aide Dante in his return to God marking the “rediscovery of the divine origin of *Eros*” (Nardi, “*Filosofia dell'Amore*”, p. 41).³⁹ The figure of Beatrice overcomes in the context of the courtly tradition the struggle between human and divine love and is crucial to Dante's development as a poet⁴⁰ which

³⁸ In his verse Guinizelli mixes theology and poetry. Objecting to Guinizelli's philosophical terminology (see Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 18), Bonagiunta “[accuses] Guido Guinizelli, the Bolognese poet whom Dante hails as the father of the new style in *Purgatorio* 26, of having altered love poetry for the worse, of having ‘changed the manner of elegant verses of love’ (*Voi, ch'avete mutata la maniera/ de li plagenti ditti de l'amore*) ...He does not understand what the ‘wisdom of Bologna’ (a reference to that city's university, noted as a center of philosophical study) has to do with love poetry, and he accuses Guinizelli of writing pretentious, obscure verse whose philosophical subtleties make it impossible to decode....Bonagiunta was right to point to the yoking of philosophy—indeed Theology—to *Eros*.” (Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 19); however, this linking Dante held to Guinizelli's credit.

³⁹ With Beatrice “love that the eyes of the beloved young girl had lit up in his heart during his adolescence is not extinguished; but on the contrary, purified of all cloud of mortality, has become light of his life, in the ascent from the lowest lacuna of the universe to the glory of God, ‘love that moves the sun and the other stars’” (Nardi, “*Filosofia dell'Amore*”, p. 92).

⁴⁰ Dante having sinned against Beatrice after her death through turning aside to other loves, most probably the cold Lady Philosophy who showed herself “proud and despising” (Nardi, “*Filosofia dell'Amore*”, p. 63), interrupted and abandoned the *Convivio* in its fourth treatise. As in the *Phaedrus*' recantation of an incorrect view of love, Dante recants his incorrect object of love placing his love back on Beatrice who after her death in the *Vita Nuova* took the place of love (Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”, p. 57; Love's last words are “And whoever should consider subtly would call that Beatrice Love because of the great resemblance which she has to me” after which the god of love disappears as Beatrice has become love, *caritas*). According to Nardi, Dante then rewrites the end of the *Vita Nuova* (pp. 72-3) and the role of Beatrice in the *Comedy*, so that the notion of love of the individual is reintroduced, not left on the first rung of the ladder of ascent as in Vlastos' reading of the *Symposium*, which is much more in keeping with the notion of love of the individual we discussed with regard both to the *Symposium* and, more particularly, the *Phaedrus*. Thereafter the beloved forms a dialectical relation with the lover to help him return to God acting as a gift, a “beatrice” from God to the lover, Dante. As a result he synthesizes passionate desire for Beatrice with pursuit of the virtue/good which she embodies in the pursuit of the Christian God who is

progressively leads to the vision of love as being of divine origin.⁴¹ As with the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia* address the opposition between two forms of love, irrational desire and idealizing contemplation of the beautiful which leads to virtue. This dichotomy between love as irrational and destructive in Cavalcanti versus Guinizelli's ideal ennobling love emerges between Francesca and Beatrice, Francesca exemplifying the former and Beatrice the latter. However, as in the *Phaedrus* where we see the opposition resolved by divine *Eros*, similarly Beatrice acts as a transition between *amor* and *caritas* and thereby Dante's answer to the problem of love. This pattern may be read as showing Dante's synthesis of the love of the individual present in the *Phaedrus*, understood through the irony of Ovid (perhaps under the Platonic influence of Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*), with a post-recantation notion of God as *Agape/Caritas*⁴² as distinct from *Amor*.

In Part II we have examined two means by which Platonism may have infiltrated the medieval society and thereby reached Dante. The first, the Neo-Platonic philosophical chain--through Plotinus to Augustine into the monastic communities through which it touched Dante—seems solid enough. The literary chain, while more delicate in that it passes through Ovid, is also plausible. However the more direct Neo-Platonic influence upon the Troubadours may seem stronger. Though the question of the sources of Platonic

caritas, the love of which Beatrice is an expression. According to Nardi, Dante rewrites the end of the *Vita Nuova* enthroning her in heaven thereby causing it to become an introduction to the *Commedia*.

⁴¹ Nardi writes, "In the discussions concerning the nature of love which were kindled among the Italian poets of the thirteenth century, there seems to have been a dialectical development comparable to the discussion of Plato's *Phaedrus*; so that from the rhetorical exercises which call to mind the discourse of Lysias we arrive with Dante at the rediscovery of the divine origin of *Eros*. It is in the poetic representation of the ascent of the soul beyond the heavens, celebrated in the second discourse of Socrates, and in the vision of Er at the end of the *Republic*, rather than in the humble visions of the Middle Ages, that the fertile seed of the philosophy and poetry of the *Commedia* can really be found." (Nardi, "Dante and Medieval Culture", p. 41)

Thus Mazzeo (*Structure and Thought*, p. 204) writes, "Nardi pointed out how the *Vita Nuova* and *Comedy* stand in a relationship to Provençal and *stil nuovo* speculations and representations of love similar to that of the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* to Greek traditions. The history of the Italian lyric up to Dante seems to recapitulate the stages of development which culminated in the conception of *Eros* presented by Socrates in those two dialogues. Nardi traces a development of love from Andreas through Cavalcanti and Guinizelli who conclude that the beauty of the beloved comes from heaven and is destined to return there and that this beauty arouses in the gentle heart every noble virtue by means of love. Such was the doctrine as Dante received it. He added a new theme, that of the death of the beloved. In dying, she became a "spiritual bellezza grande" (*Vita nuova* XXXIII, 8), and it is from this death that the platonism and mysticism of Dante arises. This is the doctrine of both the *Vita nuova* and the *Comedy*."

⁴² As Dante read the Bible in Latin (Vulgate) he would have been exposed to God as *caritas* as distinct from the Greek understanding of God as *Agape*. For this reason it is important to realize that he would draw no distinction between the two, having inherited a form of Christianity already infused with Platonism.

influence upon Dante remains debatable, it seems perfectly reasonable to accept that Platonic thought reached Dante both through the communities concerned with philosophy/theology and through the literary community, especially its poets.

PART 3
DANTE'S DIALECTICAL STRUCTURE OF LOVE
EXHIBITED IN THE *DIVINE COMEDY*

We now turn, more directly, to Dante, a poet emerging from the Christian tradition of the Middle Ages who, through the *Commedia*, reveals the conflict and reconciliation of the courtly tradition with Christianity while simultaneously and in so doing showing the indirect influence of Platonism. We have introduced our discussion of Dante by taking account of two ways through which a Platonic influence may have reached Dante. The first, the philosophical approach, traces a plausible progression from Plato through Plotinus and Augustine into medieval culture and the monastic schools of which Dante was a pupil. Secondly, through literary traditions Platonist discussion concerning the ambiguity of love and the lover's desire for wholeness with the beloved was passed down from the Platonic dialogues on love through Ovid; it may have partially formed and certainly informed the tradition of courtly love. We have highlighted the way Platonic influence seems to surface through courtly love's conflict with Christianity, expressed through the poetics of recantation. Debates concerning the ambiguity of love are expressed through the poetry of the Troubadours, particularly in their poetry of recantation, which influences the Sicilian and Tuscan schools and in turn the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* of which Dante was a part. Dante's poetry similarly shows a great concern for the positive and negative forms of love, which in his work is expressed through *amor* versus *caritas*, both echoing and providing a subtle deviation from the dichotomy of earthly and heavenly *eros*.

Given this framework, we shall examine Francesca as Dante's most eloquent articulation of courtly love and the exemplification of *amor*. First we shall see how Dante likens her to Aphrodite in Chapter X, "The Venus of Rimini", showing her understanding of love to emerge from the pagan notion of earthly *eros* associated with earthly Aphrodite. Through using the myth of Venus and Mars to articulate her very similar relationship to Paolo, Dante simultaneously ennobles her and debases/condemns her. This condemnation is further explored in Chapter XI, "Falling for Francesca", an analysis of *Inferno* V in which we see that while Dante identifies Francesca with Aphrodite he is simultaneously, as if on the opposite side of the coin, condemning her according to the Christian tradition as an Eve figure, constituting a trap into which both Paolo and Dante the pilgrim fall. By identifying her as a trap/snare (reminiscent of the net of Vulcan), she is demonstrated to be a *penia* figure who through her *penia*/lack of moral virtue which

she disguises with aesthetic and literary sensibility lures others away from the path to true virtue, causing them to fall into the *aporia* (lack of passage) and be caught forever in Hell. This in turn expresses Dante's condemnation of courtly love as aporetic, leading its followers astray resulting in their condemnation, thereby explaining the reason behind its conflict between Christianity, why it is to be condemned in Christian terms.

We then turn in Chapter XII to Beatrice whose Rebuke in *Purgatorio* XXX and XXXI marks the moment of Dante's full recantation of the notion of courtly love in favour of Christianity, following the tradition of the Troubadours. In "Beatrice as Heavenly Venus" we will explore how Dante in *Purgatorio* XXX parallels *Aeneid* I in order to represent Beatrice as heavenly Venus. Through using Christian imagery, Dante seems to rewrite heavenly *eros* in Christian terms suggesting a similarity between the two. However at the point in *Aeneid* I when Venus directs Aeneas to the town where Dido is living a difference becomes apparent. Dante indicates that heavenly *eros* ultimately degenerates to earthly *eros*, *concupiditas*, demonstrating the central problem in courtly love. Dante corrects both courtly love and reexamines Virgil however in Chapter XIII, "Conversion to *Caritas*", in which Dante, through the latter part of *Purgatorio* XXX and XXXI shows Beatrice to be an expression of God's grace for Dante, acting as a bridge between heavenly *eros* and *caritas*. As the Word of God and a Christ-like figure, she forces Dante to confront his sins and his sinful view of love, and initiates and oversees his full Christian conversion according to the model of Acts 2:36-41, after which she leads Dante to God. She thereby shows herself to be both a *poros*-figure (combining the understanding of *poros* as resource and pathway) and the reconciliation of courtly love and Christianity.

In Chapter XIV we shall discuss how through analogy Beatrice functions as a *Poros*-figure, an expression of and pathway to God. Beatrice as the bearer of central analogies concerning the nature of *eros* and the object which *eros* desires, God, through body-involving imagery and light as a way of pointing to the unrepresentable, leads the pilgrim beyond the physical towards an understanding of love and God.

In the concluding chapter of Part 3, we shall turn back to the myth of the birth of *Eros*, taking account of the way that *poros* and *penia* have been reevaluated; as Francesca tends to a *penia* dominated path exemplifying a *penia*-dominant form of *eros*, likewise

Beatrice tends to a *poros* dominated way indicative of a *poros*-dominant form of *eros*. Yet given that Christianity puts forth/posits a fullness which Platonism lacks, we shall end by examining their differences in order to distinguish better how the Platonic notion of *eros* has changed through its contact with Christianity. In the *Commedia*, Dante adds a new twist to Platonism, extending it beyond itself to Christianity so that Christianity becomes the answer to Platonism, the *poros* (pathway) out of the *aporia* (lack of way) of Platonism. As with the *aporia* (lack of way) of courtly love, Dante borrows from and converts the *aporia* in Platonism, enabling it to be integrated into and contribute to the *poros* of Christianity.

Through his use of Platonic imagery combined with his clever manipulation of myth, Dante likens Francesca to earthly Venus, thereby showing the destructive nature of uncontrolled *eros*, earthly *eros* which is not governed by *sophrosune*. The account of Paolo and Francesca in *Inferno* V begins, "Poet, I would fain speak with these two that go together and seem so light upon the wind" (*Poeta, volentieri parlerei a quei due che insieme vanno, e paion sì al vento esser leggieri*; lines 73-75). Dante is intrigued by them and desires to speak to them because they are together and because they are "light on the wind." The first distinguishing quality about the two spirits¹ is their "togetherness."

1. HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF FRANCESCA AND PAOLO

Dante desires to speak with them to find out who they are. The female shade, not identified until line 116, is Francesca, wife of the ruler of Rimini, of whom relatively little is known.² She, the daughter of Guido Minore da Polenta of Ravenna, married

¹ In the *Inferno* all the personalities Dante sees and comes into contact with are shades, disembodied spirits as shown by Dante greeting the woman as '*anime*' (80) contrasted with her calling him '*animal*' (88). Their existence is of a spiritual/non-physical nature (see Boyde, *Perception and Passion in Dante*, pp. 141-2). Chiampì observes this slightly differently: "the pilgrim's first word to Francesca is '*anime*' and hers to him '*animal*'—words that express, in turn, the difference between her carnal vision and his eventual spiritual vision. '*Animal*', as virtually all the commentators are aware, means animate being: it nevertheless does not cease to mean beast. Indeed, it is the play of these meanings that provides a *basso ostinato* more perceptible on the printed page than in the dramatic action of the canto. As we shall see, Francesca's words themselves evidence the unlikeness that has infested her being. In sum, she has identified the core of her being with the lower, sensitive part of the soul that she shares with the beasts." (Chiampì, pp. 58-59)

² Given there is no document or chronicle before Dante of Francesca's love for Paolo and their murder (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 84; also see Durling Canto V, note 116 and Musa, *Commentary*, p. 77; "There is not even a historical record in Ravenna confirming that the lovers died on the same day"), "although the event must have been well known" (Grandgent, p. 47), it is difficult to date the event. Parodi estimates that the date falls "between 1283-1286." (E.G. Parodi p. 63 in Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 84), while Grandgent (p. 47) and Sayers (*Commentary*, p. 102) believe it to be about 1285. "When Dante was eighteen, in 1282-1283, Paolo was for five months in Florence as *Capitano del Popolo*; he is not mentioned among Malatesta's sons in 1287; and in 1288 there is evidence of a child born to Giovanni by a second wife. In 1285 Paolo was some 35 years old, had been married sixteen years, and had two children; Francesca had one child. Paolo's daughter married a son of Aghinolfo of Romena." (Grandgent, p. 47) However though "it is easy to suppose that he had knowledge which is lacking to us on which to base his portraiture of Francesca" (Sinclair, p. 84), for De Sanctis (p. 36) dates and the historical character are of little importance. "It little matters how Dante was led to the conception of this Francesca; and it matters still less to know

whether through ruse³ or mutual consent the physically deformed Giovanni di Malatesta da Verrucchio or Gianciotto, master of Rimini, for political reasons, and fell in love with his handsome younger brother Paolo who had been *Capitano del Popolo*. Gianciotto may have surprised them together (see Boccaccio), *Inferno* V suggesting that he has killed them both⁴ which explains why they remain united having died together. In line 106 they are brought to “*una morte*” implying that they died at the same time. Furthermore, the

whether, or to what extent, he may have altered or modified historical tradition. What matters is this: Francesca, as Dante conceived her, is more alive and real than she could ever be as presented by history” (also see Boyde, p. 292). However, that Francesca is named only at line 116 and that Paolo is never named, Singleton (*Commentary*, p. 92) interprets as “true indications that the poet is presenting a *cause celebre*” (Also see Musa, *Commentary*, p. 77).

³ Boccaccio, asked by the city of Florence to give the first weekly public lectures on Dante one year after his death and who having interviewed the family claimed to be an authority, tells the story as follows. “A long, harsh war had raged between [Guido Minore da Polenta] and the Malatesta, lords of Rimini, when through certain intermediaries, peace was treated and concluded. To make it all the more firm, both sides were pleased to cement it with marriage.” However, Guido Minore da Polenta was warned by a friend that given Gianciotto being deformed and as Francesca was extremely “high-spirited”, she would never go through with the marriage. The friend advised the father to fool Francesca by having one of Gianciotto’s brothers, Paolo, marry her in his name. Prior to the marriage contract, Francesca saw Paolo, “handsome, pleasing, very courteous” and fell in love with him and thereafter accepted the marriage and went to Rimini. It was not until the morning after the wedding day that she realized she had been fooled and was furious and continued to love Paolo. It is not clear how their renewed relationship began, Boccaccio claiming that Dante probably constructed his own story based on probability. “And thus happened what [Gianciotto] would not have wanted: before reaching Paolo, the blade passed through Francesca’s bosom. Gianciotto, completely beside himself because of this accident—for he loved the woman more than himself—withdrew the blade, struck Paolo again, and killed him. Leaving them both dead, he left, and returned to his duties. The next morning, amidst much weeping, the lovers were buried in the same tomb.” (See Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 87-9 for translation of Italian.)

If Boccaccio’s reading is accepted, then Francesca has a case for at least ‘partial’ innocence. She has been deceived and treated treacherously; fooled into a marriage she would never have agreed to. Also there is a case for the righting of injustice, the actualizing of her marriage vows to him to whom she vowed. She believed that she was marrying Paolo so in her heart she pledged herself in matrimony to Paolo, and only to Paolo did she make her vow of fidelity, not to an empty name but to an individual present before her eyes. Therefore on some level Paolo was her husband, though following the ceremony she was tricked. This implies that her infidelity to Gianciotto can be seen on some level as the righting of a wrong, not in terms of revenge though there may have been some element of this present, but more precisely a return to her ‘real’ husband, the man she actually married. In Genesis 2:23—“A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.” Her vows were a pledging of the fulfillment of this scripture, though its fulfillment was reached/actualized with another, Gianciotto. Leaving aside discussions of the power of the name and the distinction between a man and his name, Francesca the lover of “beautiful words” (Shapiro, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 107), ultimately becomes the victim of words and their impious manipulation, as these words imprison her by binding her to the flesh of a man to whom she had not pledged herself in matrimony. Thus, ironically, to return to the man she had pledged herself to in matrimony ceased to be fidelity and the fulfillment of the vow of matrimony but became adultery and incest. Dante’s references to Genesis 2:23 with regard to the togetherness of Paolo and Francesca is ironic undercutting of Francesca’s surface piety, if Boccaccio is accepted.

Though Boccaccio tends to embellish history and make it more politically correct, De Sanctis accepts his version (p. 34) though Croce (p. 28) does not. “Others pretend...[that] the anecdote (the late anecdote) of how she was taken from Paolo and given to Gianciotto by stratagem” is true.

⁴ See Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 102.

next sentence reads "*Caina attende chi vita ci spende*" ("Caina waits for him who quenched our life"; line 107). As Caina, the ninth circle of Hell, was reserved for the punishment of those treacherous to kindred (*Inferno XXXII*) and as Cain murdered his brother Abel, this suggests that the man who killed them was definitely kindred, more specifically Paolo's full brother Gianciotto, a point reinforced by Dante's use of myth as we shall see. Though Francesca is not explicit and seems somewhat evasive (Boyde, p. 296), she implies that Gianciotto discovered them together, though whether the scene resembled that which Boccaccio describes is unanswerable. In any case it is clear from *Inferno V* line 106 that he killed them together, perhaps simultaneously in that it was a "single death" (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 160) which occurred in a particularly offensive manner ("*e 'l modo ancor m'offende*"; line 102; as for the violent nature see line 107).

This unity in death suggests the physical unity in life "the two [having become] one flesh" (Genesis 2:23), which seems to suggest that they died as one "flesh" caught in the act of adultery. Dante's image seems to evoke John 8: 1-11 which describes the scene in which a woman is brought to Jesus by the Pharisees who was "caught in the act of adultery" (John 8:4). The two shades as *anima* "[going] together" (lines 74-5) not only are suggestive of a union of the spirit (which though they go together is not really achieved; see lines 139-140) but also a union of flesh implying a union of two in one and which will never be parted ("*che mai da me non fia diviso*"; line 135) This is revealed when one reads beyond Canto V to Canto XIII, where Piero della Vigna explains that after the final judgement all damned souls will receive their bodies back (*Inferno XIII*: 104-6; '*Come l'altre verrem per nostre spoglie, ma non però ch'alcuna sen rivesta; chè non è giusto aver cio ch'om si toglie*'). The direct implication of this passage when applied to Canto V (which the reader realizes only in retrospect) is that when Francesca and Paolo receive their bodies back, their bodies like their souls will go together, united forever in the state in which they died, suggesting the horrific nature of their punishment as intensified following the final judgment.⁵

⁵ "The protagonist had asked whether 'these torments will increase after the Last Judgment, or whether they will be less, or equally roasting?' And he was invited 'to think back to your new science, which requires that the more perfect a thing is, the more it feels both good and suffering. So, although this cursed race will never achieve true perfection, they must expect to be closer to that state, rather than further from it' (and hence their suffering will increase when their former bodies are restored)." (Boyde, p. 168)

This state of unity in the rapture of an eternal physical embrace immediately brings to mind Aristophanes' myth of the circular people in the *Symposium* (192e9-193d6), a dialogue which Dante had never read⁶ though he was familiar with Ovid who alludes to it as noted in the last chapter. The circular people divided in two by Zeus, desire more than anything else "to be merged, that is into utter oneness with the beloved...following after the primeval state,... and [thereby to be established]...in joy and blessedness." Aristophanes further jokes

"Suppose two lovers are lying together and Hephaestus stands over them with his mending tools, asking, 'What is it you human beings really want from each other?' And suppose they're perplexed, and he asks them again: 'Is this your heart's desire, then—for the two of you to become parts of the same whole, as near can be, and never to separate, day and night? Because if that's your desire, I'd like to weld you together and join you into something that is naturally whole, so that the two of you are made into one. Then the two of you would be one being, and by the same token, when you died, you would be one and not two in Hades, having died a single death.'" (*Symposium*, 192D3-192E4)

Invoking the image of Hephaestus capturing Aphrodite and Ares in his net, the relevance of which we consider below, this physical state of eternal unity is presented as sought after as the ultimate end and absolute good of the soul. Chiampi (p. 72) notes the resemblance of the speech of Aristophanes with the unity of Francesca and Paolo, comparing them with the circular people. "Francesca's love... degenerated rapidly into self-reference as she and Paolo melded into this undifferentiated Platonic amalgam", unified even in Hell where two due to a common death form one. However, within the *Symposium*, Aristophanes' understanding of love is ultimately rejected for the pursuit of *to kalon*, the form of the beautiful, which Neo-Platonic writers reinterpreted as referring to the One and which Christian Neo-Platonists then understood as alluding to God, a pattern eventually followed by Dante. In Aristophanes' speech this state is taken both seriously and in a tongue-in-cheek way. Aristophanes, a writer of Comedy, tells a provoking, funny and absurd tale, which while making fun of humanity's obsession with fulfilment in erotic love, points to a deep truth concerning mankind's need for love and wholeness, a subject which Ovid, following the Platonic tradition expressed in

⁶ Moore, "Dante and Plato", *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 156.

Aristophanes' speech (Barkan, p. 57), ironically refers to in *Metamorphosis* IV, 371-8. Ovid also, in *The Art of Love*, mocks erotic love as the *telos* of human activity, through portraying it as a serious concern in need of rules, a book which was misunderstood through being taken seriously,⁷ influencing the tradition of courtly love in the Middle Ages.⁸ It should be noted that references to this type of image in antiquity typically alluded to the Myth of Mars and Venus. Dante, a diligent scholar of Ovid and antique Latin literature, was well aware of this.

2. THE MYTH OF MARS AND VENUS

Dante's conception of an eternal physical embrace appears to relate on several levels to the Mars and Venus myth. In order to appreciate this we must take account of the story as Dante would have known it. Although Dante would have known the myth through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, his writing shows evidence of an awareness of many elements of the myth as recounted in the *Odyssey*, the text upon which Ovid's description is based. Though Dante would not have read the *Odyssey* himself,⁹ fragments of the *Odyssey* found their way into the texts of many Latin authors, such as Lucian and Fulgentius, who had been read by Dante. Thus as we explore the relation of the myth of Mars and Venus to the account of Paolo and Francesca, we shall locate the relevant sources for various aspects of the myth in both the *Odyssey* and the Latin texts, and in the case of Paolo show how the modifications made through the Latin texts altered Dante's representation of him. But before exploring the action of the myth itself, it will be useful to look at the correspondences between the list of actors and their relationships.

The structure of the myth of Mars and Venus is not only suggested by the story of Paolo and Francesca but duplicates it almost exactly. As Vulcan and Mars were brothers, both sons of the same parents, Hera and Zeus, Juno and Jupiter (henceforth I will generally use the Latin names to prevent confusion), likewise Paolo and Gianciotto were

⁷ Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 6.

⁸ Lewis, *Allegory*, pp. 7-8.

⁹ Though Dante may have read Greek, "it is clear that if [Dante] knew anything of Homer, it was not from the original, but from some secondary source, such as his quotation by other authors, e. g. by Aristotle or Horace." (Moore, "Dante and Plato", *Studies in Dante*, First Series, p. 164-5)

brothers of the same parents.¹⁰ As Mars was the younger brother of Vulcan,¹¹ so Paolo was the younger brother of Gianciotto. Vulcan (Hephaestus) was the

god of fire (the volcano takes its name from him), and the blacksmith who forged the weapons of many gods and heroes...educator of primitive man, and taught him the proper use of fire...He was crippled from birth, or as a result of being thrown down to earth from Olympus by Jupiter in a fit of anger. He is seen...with a crutch under one arm or in an awkward posture because of his deformity...protector of the craftsmen...In allegories of the four elements Vulcan personifies fire. (Hall, p. 338)

Giovanni the “second son of Malatesta da Verrucchio, lord of Rimini (called ‘*il mastin vecchio*’ in *Inf.* XXVII, 46)” resembles Vulcan in that he was “ugly and deformed”.¹² He was called Gianciotto meaning *Gian ciotto* = ‘crippled John.’ Due to Vulcan’s skill and “ingenuity”¹³ in making lightning bolts for Jupiter, Jupiter gave him Venus as his bride. This cleverness may be suggested in that Gianciotto the second son was made Lord of Rimini.¹⁴ Vulcan was the god of fire and this fire can be understood in several ways. Firstly, fire is literally the power held in a burning flame. Also fire can be interpreted as anger which he is able to use properly (Hall, p. 358). This is exemplified by Vulcan’s rage regarding Venus’ infidelity which caused him to have “a heart full of evil thoughts” which he channels into the construction of the net (*Odyssey* Book VIII, 273). In the *Aeneid* (369-390) Vulcan’s fire is lustful desire, motivated by his wife which he uses to constructive ends, the creation of Aeneas’ shield.¹⁵ In Gianciotto, both aspects of fire are

¹⁰ Grandgent, p. 47; Boccaccio, trans. Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 87; Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 102.

¹¹ Lucian, “Jealousy of the comeliest gods at Vulcan’s success in marriage,” XV, trans. Took, p. 88.

¹² Boccaccio, Singleton, *Commentary* trans. p. 87.

¹³ In *Odyssey* VIII. 297, we see a concrete example of his ingenuity.

¹⁴ Gianciotto was viewed as the most capable and promising of the Malatesta da Verrocchio’s sons. Boccaccio writes that because he was a “very capable man, and everyone expected that he would become ruler when his father died. For this reason, though he was ugly and deformed, Messer Guido wanted him rather than one of his brothers as a son-in-law” (Singleton translation, p. 87, line 97).

¹⁵ Strangely in the *Aeneid* there seems to be no reference to the myth of Mars and Venus. The only discussion of their relationship is positive, basically harmonious and motivational. In order to win Vulcan over to help Aeneas she “turned to Vulcan..in her bridal chamber all of gold, putting divine desire in every word....The goddess spoke and wrapped her snowy arms this way and that around him in her swansdown embrace. And instantly he felt the flame of love invading him as ever; into his marrow ran the fire he knew, and through his bones, as when sometimes, ripped by a thunder peal, a fiery flash goes jagged through the clouds. His wife, contented with her blandishment, sure of her loveliness, perceived it all. Lord Vulcan, captive to immortal passion answered her,” and made a shield to protect Aeneas. (*Aeneid* 369-390, translation Fitzgerald, p. 242-243). Interestingly, Virgil’s understanding of Vulcan’s relation to fire, his attribute, here is the fire of lust. This fiery lust is identified with lightning bolts. Jupiter gave Vulcan Venus

present; anger towards Paolo and Francesca and lust related to revenge concerning the infidelity of his wife (*Inferno* V, line 106-7). The aspect of Vulcan which is absent from Gianciotto is Vulcan's self-control, his ability to channel fire to its proper and creative uses. Gianciotto dominated by fire becomes purely destructive, fire out of control, and therefore a poor copy of the god himself.

While Gianciotto resembles Vulcan, Paolo embodies many of the qualities of Mars. Mars (Ares) is the

god of war...[with a] brutal and aggressive nature...[He has] a warlike spirit who is tamed by love,....young and vigorous...[with] armour...helmet and shield...[which] are laid aside when he is conquered by love.¹⁶ (Hall, pp. 200-201)

Lucian in explaining why Vulcan overlooks their affair writes "To engage with a lusty young rival, who is moreover a soldier, it would not be advisable"¹⁷ In Fowler this is translated as "a martial young fellow". This shows not only that Mars is envisaged as a soldier but also that he is younger and stronger than Vulcan. Likewise, Paolo is younger and stronger than Gianciotto (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 102). Like Mars, Paolo was a soldier, the *Capitano del Popolo* in Florence from 1282-1283 when Dante was 18. Given this military role, Paolo was probably on some level manly and virile. While Mars was considered "good-looking and sound of limb" (*Odyssey*, VIII, 37-8), Paolo in turn was handsome enough that in *Inferno* 104 Francesca admits to having been strongly seized by "his charm",¹⁸ i.e., his person or his *amor*, reminiscent of *Phaedrus* 255. As "Mars, plagued with frenzied love of Venus, from a terrible captain became a lover," (Ovid, *The*

for a wife as a reward for fashioning the thunderbolt for Jupiter (Bulfinch, p. 22) When Venus is unfaithful, Vulcan demands that Jupiter return what he made for him, the thunderbolts, in exchange for the release of Mars and Venus, though at the prompting of Neptune, Vulcan eventually lets them free. As Mars and Venus are not a focus in Virgil, perhaps Dante in making them so central is trying to improve upon Virgil in the same way as Francesca can be read as Dante's competition with Virgil concerning his representation of Dido.

¹⁶ "In early Renaissance painting he may be accompanied by a wolf, the animal sacred to him in Roman times and having, like him, an aggressive nature.....Mars was the father of Romulus and Remus who were reared by a she-wolf." (Hall, pp. 200-1) This is of interest with regard to the *Inferno* given Dante's initial encounter with the she-wolf in Canto I: 49-51. (The she-wolf for Sinclair (p. 31) represents covetousness).

¹⁷ Lucian, "Jealousy of the comeliest gods at Vulcan's success in marriage", XV, trans. Tooke, p. 88.

¹⁸ Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 102, Boccaccio, p. 87; "Paolo was a handsome, pleasing and very courteous man".

Art of Love, II, 561-2)¹⁹ so likewise Paolo “all trembling” became the lover of Francesca (*Inferno* V, 136; also 130-132).

Francesca resembles Venus. Venus (Aphrodite) is the goddess of “love and fertility...Among her attributes are: a pair of doves or swans, either may draw her chariot.” (Hall, p. 318) In *Inferno* V when Francesca and Paolo approach Dante, they are compared to doves which are symbols simultaneously of peace and lust.²⁰ “As doves,

¹⁹ “To pass through companies of guards and bands of sentinels is ever the task both of soldier and wretched lover. Mars is doubtful, and Venus, too, not sure; the vanquished rise again, and they fall [whom] you would say could never be brought low.” (Ovid, *Heriodes and Amores*, I. ix, lines 27-30) “It is Venus alone who can without fear stand in the path of Mars’ chariot and bring it to a halt (262-5), for the power of Love is greater than that of Strife.” [For the history of this idea, cf. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, 84ff.] (David Vessey, *Statius and the Thebaid*, p. 86)

²⁰ Durling refers to *Aeneid* 6:92, when the “doves of Venus guide Aeneas to the golden bough, the key to entering Hades.” (Durling, p. 96) Also “Diodorus Siculus (60 B.C.)...retells the legend of [Semiramis] semi-divine origin...her being rescued from death as a child by the care of doves, connecting both her name itself and her final metamorphosis into a dove at her death with this episode” (Jacoff, “Transgression and Transcendence”, p. 54)

This reference of the doves clearly echoes “*Qualis spelunca subito commota columba, cui domus et dulces latebroso in pumice nidi, fertur in arva volans plausumque exterrita pinnis dat tecto ingentem, mox aere lapsa quieto radit iter liquidum celeris neque commovet alas.*” [Even as, if startled suddenly from her cave, a dove whose home and sweet nestlings are in the rocky coverts, wings her flight to the fields and, frightened from her home, flaps loudly with her wings; soon, gliding in the peaceful air, she skims her liquid way and stirs not her swift pinions.] (*Aeneid* V, 213-217) “Dante, however, while keeping a part of the general picture and a few of the expressions (‘sweet nest’ and ‘motionless wings’), alters the situation, making the dove fly to her nest instead of away from it; furthermore, he infuses an entirely new spirit into the figure by his conception of love as the sole power that sustains the mother bird in her flight.” (Grandgent, p. 52, also Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 82-3) “This image of two doves returning to their nests, with all its connotations of peacefulness and divine love (the Holy Spirit is traditionally represented as a dove), is far more Heavenly than infernal. Particularly interesting are the words ‘desire’ and ‘will’, which appear in syntactically similar constructions (‘*dal disio chiamate*’, ‘*dal voler portate*’). In Scripture, desire and will in consort work against spirituality, and their apparently positive relationship here may be ironic, especially since the dove image has such a long tradition as a beneficent, even salvific sign in biblical writings (cf. Gen, 8. 8-12, and Song of Songs). The dove was known to the ancients (Pliny, for example) as a monogamous bird that shunned the bestial, in obvious contrast to these adulterous lovers of the circle of the lustful.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 74) “The image of the two doves is both elegant and gentle, not unlike the lovers whom it serves to introduce.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 68) “As a scene of natural innocence and bliss, this also speaks of the garden and hence of the paradisaal state.” (Masciandro, p. 75) “The doves are the birds of love, and here they introduce a ray of Paradise, but only as a foil to the lovers’ distress; there is no ‘sweet nest’ for the latter!” (Cambon, p. 64) Francesca craves peace and the dove is the symbol of peace.

In contrast to this view, “Starlings and doves were associated in the medieval bestiaries with lust” (citation by Durling, p. 95), “proverbial in Dante’s day for their luxuria.” (Boyde, p. 293) “A dove, the instant before alighting, will raise its wings vertically. The wording of this simile captures the moment just preceding the one where the bird’s sexual desire is satisfied in the nest. That moment—the one just before satisfaction—becomes an important theme in the rest of the canto. See 98-99, 124, 118-120, 130-2.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 74-5)

Balancing these two views Masciandro (p. 75) writes, “this scene is animated by a pair of doves, birds traditionally identified with love and peace, although they are at times also associated with lechery. The season, we can surmise, is not, as before, that of the ‘*freddo tempo*’ (‘cold season’) of late fall, but its opposite, spring, the season of love. As reference to the nest clearly suggests, this love is a positive,

summoned by desire, come with wings poised and motionless to the sweet nest, borne by their will through the air,²¹ so these left their troop where Dido²² is, coming to us through the malignant air.” (V, 82-86) Francesca and Paolo flying towards Dante like doves, as it were draw behind them the personification of Venus, ‘embodied’ in Francesca. Like Venus who is a “lovely creature...[and] a marvel to behold” (*Odyssey* VIII, 320 and 366) Francesca had a “*bella persona*” (101). The self-conscious language she uses suggests that she was truly remarkable to see as she still is to hear—though the body is gone, the language remains. “Her words most clearly reveal...good breeding...hers is an aristocratic nature, now fired with ardent memories, now tempered by sweet feminine grace,” (Musa, *Advent*, p. 20), “her refinement of speech”²³ expressing “gentleness and modest reticence” (Grandgent, p. 47).²⁴ To some, it seems “the attractiveness of her personality is great enough to atone for her sin.” (Musa, *Advent*, p. 19) Also like Venus who is “a slave to her passions” (*Odyssey* VIII, 320),²⁵ Francesca claims “Love...exempts no one beloved from loving” (*Inferno* V, 103), blaming Love’s irresistible power for her adulterous relationship with Paolo (100-106), a subject that will be discussed in the next chapter. That she is motivated uniquely by love is brought to the

creative force. Significantly, the doves are not seen as being only drawn to one another, or as lovers carried by unbridled passion (a ‘tempest’), but as drawn by desire which is activated by its object, the ‘sweet nest’, which obviously represents the fruitfulness of love.” Dante saw Paolo and Francesca as “a pair of doves gliding towards their nest, unable to dissociate an infernal from a paradisaic scene.” (Masciandaro, p. 82) The ambiguity emerges in that with every negative there is the possibility that it could have been its opposite. Francesca could have been godly and represented by a dove of peace, but instead she chose to be her own love goddess and become an image of pagan Aphrodite so the doves take the negative meaning.

²¹ “The language of desire includes ‘*piego*’, a word previously used in v.79, where the wind ‘bends’ Francesca and Paolo towards Dante: emblematic of the way they come—‘*Quali colombe, dal disio chiamate*’ (V. 81). The desire is dual: theirs and Dante’s (or Venus’s, in the image, if they are her doves).” (Tambling, *Dante and Difference*, p. 14; also see Brandeis, p. 26)

²² This mention of Dido intensifies the image of Venus because when Aeneas sees Dido in the underworld it is described as “a myrtle woodland” (*Aeneid*, VI, 448). Like “the red rose (stained with her blood)... the myrtle (evergreen like love) are sacred to her [Venus].” (Hall, pp. 318-319) When in line 90 Francesca states that she and Paolo have “stained the world with blood” according to Durling (p. 97) “Francesca is alluding to Ovid’s tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, residents of Semiramis’ Babylon. (see *Meta.* 4:55-169): Pyramus’ blood stains the mulberry first red, then, when it dries, black.”

²³ Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 101 and p. 107.

²⁴ “There is the delicacy, one might even say the femininity, of her words indirectly alluding to the hideous fact of their murder: ‘*noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno.*’ Not the basic word *sangue* but its derivative *sanguigno*—and the blood which she mentions is a ‘tint’.” (Musa, *Advent*, p. 21)

²⁵ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 89; Cambon, p. 57) Also see Lucian, “Why Cupid leaves some goddesses unexcited,” *Dialogues*, XIX, trans. Tooke, p. 96-7)

fore by Virgil's suggestion to "entreat [Francesca and Paolo]... by the love that leads them, and they will come" (78-79), so that they are "summoned by desire" (82).²⁶

Now returning to the myth of Mars and Venus itself as represented in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid writes, the Sun

was first, 'tis said, to see the shame of Mars and Venus; this god sees all first. Shocked at the sight, he revealed her sin to the goddess' husband, Vulcan, Juno's son, and where it was committed. Then Vulcan's mind reeled and the work upon which he was engaged fell from his hands. Straight away he fashioned a net of fine links of bronze, so thin that they would escape detection of the eye. Not the finest threads of wool would surpass that work; no not the web which the spider lets down from the ceiling beam. He made the web in such a way that it would yield to the slightest touch, the least movement, and then he spread it deftly over the couch. Now when the goddess and her paramour had come thither, by the husband's art and by the net so cunningly prepared they were both caught and held fast in each other's arms. Straightway Vulcan, the Lemnian, opened wide the ivory doors and let in the other gods. There lay the two in chains, disgracefully, and some one of the merry gods prayed that he might be so disgraced. The gods laughed, and for a long time this story was the talk of Heaven. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, lines 171-192)

Like Vulcan and Venus, the aristocratic Francesca married Gianciotto, the lame brother of Paolo and heir to his father, the Lord of Rimini. Though from *Inferno* V we do not know the context of the marriage,²⁷ both were arranged marriages: Vulcan had made gifts for Zeus while Gianciotto married for political reasons, meaning that in neither case were they choices made for love (a concept foreign to thirteenth century Italy), but marriages imposed on the brides by their fathers.²⁸ Both Venus and Francesca fell in love with their husbands' more attractive younger brothers who were both men of war and both Venus and Francesca were adulterous in the houses of their respective husbands.²⁹ In both cases

²⁶ E.G. Parodi cited by Sinclair, p. 83.

²⁷ If Boccaccio is accepted (see note 3) further parallels lie in the correspondence between relations in the family of the gods and the active strife which divided the families of Paolo and Francesca and the way that in both cases the marriages in question were arranged by fathers for their most resourceful sons for reasons concerned with power politics.

²⁸ Depending upon the account, Jupiter is not always Venus' father. While in Hesiod *Theogony* 188-200, Aphrodite is "born of the sea—from the foam produced by the genitals of the castrated Uranos...when they were cast upon the waters" (Hall, p. 320), in the myth of the *Odyssey* VIII, 306, however, Zeus is the father of Aphrodite and chief of the gods. If one wishes to consolidate the versions, as head of the gods after the deposition of Uranos and Cronos, Zeus had power over Aphrodite as that of a father.

²⁹ *Odyssey* 270-1; Lucian "The net of Vulcan", XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 92; Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 88.

the lovers were found out, in the myth by the Sun, Helios³⁰ though in *Inferno* V how is not mentioned.³¹ In reaction while Vulcan channelled all of his anger and ingenuity into the construction of a net, a male relative of Paolo and Francesca, presumably Gianciotto, “quenched [their] life” (line 107) in an extremely offensive way (line 101). In the first the lovers were caught and trapped, while in the latter they were murdered.³²

This is the point where Dante’s genius makes itself felt. For Dante it seems Francesca and Paolo were killed while physically together. For Boyde (note 36, p. 292), “With Francesca ... it was presumably the manner of [her] death (murder in *flagrante delicto*...) that captured [Dante’s] imagination.”³³ Though Boccaccio explains that Paolo was clothed, given that Aphrodite and Mars were “caught in the act”,³⁴ this suggests that Paolo and Francesca likewise were “discovered in an amorous embrace” (Musa, *Commentary*, p, 73).³⁵ Francesca states “his charm that, as thou seest, does not leave me yet” (V, 105; *mi prese del costui piacer sì forte, che, come vedi, ancor non m’abbandon*), indicating that from the beginning of their relation to the present Paolo’s charm has not left her, his charm representing his *amor* for her (his physical attraction for her) or the attraction being Paolo himself.³⁶ “He...never shall be parted from me” (V, 135; *questi*,

³⁰ Lucian, “The Net of Vulcan,” XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 92-3; Ovid, *The Art of Love*, II. 564.

³¹ Boccaccio suggests the report was made by “a certain servant of Gianciotto” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 88). He indicates the parallel is even closer in that the betrayed husbands pretend to go on trips (*Odyssey* VIII 281-2 and Lucian “The Net of Vulcan,” XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 92), Gianciotto “went to some nearby city as *podesta*.” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 88)

³² Given this tight fitting of the myth of Mars and Venus to the story of Paolo and Francesca as represented in *Inferno* V and how it is supported by the account of Boccaccio, it would seem that Boccaccio (putting aside his political politeness) is not altogether unreliable. The other option is that Boccaccio intentionally wrote his account of the historical Francesca with the myth of Mars and Venus in mind.

³³ *Amor condusse noi ad una morte* (106), “the third verse of the anaphora fatefully seals the doom of the lovers, as if Love himself had pronounced the decree; “*una morte*” seems to unite these lovers in that moment of death and forever thereafter.” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 91) “Use of the singular, ‘a death’, plays on the conceit of dying in orgasm but also on the irony that in committing this sin they literally died as one, experiencing a joint death by violence.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 79)

³⁴ In Lucian’s “The Net of Vulcan” (XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 92) Mercury tells Apollo “Venus and her Mars are caught in the act.” They were “caught in the snare the two lie naked. He summons the gods; the captured pair afford a spectacle; scarce did Venus, they say, restrain her tears. They cannot cover their faces, nor even veil their lewd parts with their hands.” (Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, II, 565-66) Since Ovid writes in *Ars Amatoria*, “caught in the snare the two lie naked” the implication is that Francesca and Paolo are likewise naked. “Scarce did Venus, they say, restrain her tears” makes us remember that Paolo is crying. Though Francesca and Paolo are at present spirits, soon, after judgment, like Mars and Venus in *Ars Amatoria*, “they [will not be able to] cover their faces, nor even veil their lewd parts with their hands”.

³⁵ For Sayers (*Commentary*, p. 103), line 102 ‘the way of it leaves me still distressed’ may refer to “the way of the murder, because the lovers were killed in the very act of sin and so had no time for repentance”.

³⁶ “The phrase ‘*e ’l modo ancor m’offende*’ may be linked to the preceding relative clause, ‘[*la bella persona*] *che mi fu tolta*,’ but not because Francesca is offended by the manner of her death—not having

che mai da me non fia diviso) likewise invokes a sense of lust in that it precedes the clause “*la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante*” (line 136) suggesting the physical consummation not of an idealized love, as in the clause preceding and with regard to the “*disatio riso*” (line 133), but of physical lust which will be a continued/eternal state, the physicality emphasized by the word “*bocca*” (136).³⁷ This implies a lustful consummation that was fixed and endured beyond the moment of death into the present and which will endure eternally. As earlier mentioned, after all the bodies of the dead are returned to the respective souls, tragically and even horrifically Francesca and Paolo will have their bodies returned to them in the state in which they were taken away, implying that they will forever be in each others arms embracing at the moment of their murder. Returning to the myth of Mars and Venus, the lovers were caught in a net fixed in each other’s embrace where Vulcan (Hephaestus) intends to leave them for eternity as he says in the *Odyssey* or until Zeus (Jupiter) returns his gift of thunderbolts,³⁸ which as an attribute of Jupiter are irretrievable, though he relents at the request of Neptune (Poseidon).³⁹ In contrast, Gianciotto kills them without mercy and implicitly God condemns them without compassion, contrasting with the pilgrim’s compassion. Through killing Paolo and Francesca in each other’s arms, Gianciotto intends to punish them for eternity by destroying them in body and soul, thus allowing no hope of the repentance allowed the adulterous women in John 8:11 (“Neither do I condemn you...Go now and

time to repent and she and Paolo being exposed in their intimacy. It is more likely that Francesca is still suffering primarily because she and Paolo were not only exposed together but were also killed together. Note that the ‘*ancor*’ of line 102 is paralleled by the ‘*ancor*’ three lines later, which, in turn, points to the ‘*mai*’ of line 135. Thus, Francesca’s two references to her and Paolo’s fated inseparability (105 and 135-136) are stylistically linked with the reference to the manner of their death (‘*e ’l modo...*’ 102). The ‘manner’ of their death ‘still’ torments her, for she is ‘still’ linked with Paolo who will ‘never’ leave her...[Concerning *ancor non m’abandona*,] most commentators (see, for example, Sapegno, Bosco and Reggio, Porena) take the subject of this phrase to be ‘*amor*’, although ‘Paolo’ also works well from a grammatical point of view.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 78)

³⁷ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 94; Boyde, p. 300. Durling notes that Dante continues to use the passive form. “For another reference to this scene, see *Paradiso* 16:14-15 (the ‘first recorded fault of Guinevere’)” (Durling, p. 99)

³⁸ In the *Odyssey* VIII, originally Vulcan’s intention is “to keep them prisoners forever” (276) but then decides “to keep them just where they are, till her father hands me back every one of the gifts I made him to win” her (317-8).

³⁹ *Odyssey* VIII, 344-346; Ovid *The Art of Love* II, 596; Lucian, “The Net of Vulcan,” XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 92-3.

leave your life of sin"). Sealing their own fates, Francesca and Paolo die unrepentant,⁴⁰ imperfect finite copies of the pagan original and, compounding the sin, worshipping a false divinity, as we shall see.

3. "TOGETHERNESS": A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

Many commentators have considered the fact that Paolo and Francesca are together in Hell as a sign of God's compassion on them⁴¹ or as a statement of the power and consistency of love,⁴² thus rendering their situation in more positive terms. Though I wish these positive readings were the intention of Dante, it seems clear that Dante has something else which is far more terrible and even horrific in mind. We should be put on our guard by the fact that in the brief introductory lines we are told they "seem so light upon the wind" (V, 75). This lightness, in comparison to the train of lovers, indicates if

⁴⁰ "But the souls in Purgatory had felt genuine remorse for the wrong they knew they had done of their own free will. Even in the moment of violent death they had shed a 'little tear' which was enough to rescue them from the devil." (Boyde, p. 297) "Time itself would be no object, for we know that the repentance of Buonconte da Montefeltro (*Purg.* V) took place at the *ultima ora* and consisted in dying with the name of Mary on his lips (*Purgatorio* V. 101)." (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 102) This suggests that Francesca even at the moment of death was wholeheartedly committed to her adultery.

⁴¹ "Greater than their sin was the mercy of God, who out of consideration for so great a love softened their punishment by permitting them to continue it even in Hell." (De Sanctis, p. 34)

⁴² Grandgent (p. 47) says "Amid the tortures of Hell, where all is hatred, her love does not forsake her, and she glories in the thought that she and Paolo shall never be parted." Carroll (pp. 92-3) calls togetherness "the comfort, bitter sweet, of not being separated." If they "seem upon the wind to be so light," "it is rather that their being together makes it easier for them to float on the winds of passion,—it seems their native element. Hence the comparison with doves that follows....There was to him something soft, gentle, dove-like in the love which had brought them to the 'woeful pass,'" something which "rewards" their "faithfulness" (Carroll, p. 99; also see Carroll, p. 95 concerning the "nobility" of this love and Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 101 with regard to Francesca's consistency). From a different point of view De Sanctis (p. 47) writes, "Those two who go together, love through all eternity not because they are not damned, but precisely because they are damned. In Paradise the earthly is raised to the divine, whereas in Hell the earthly remains eternal and unaltered. In Dante's Hell the sinners retain all their passions and are therefore impenitent and damned...The mark of the damned soul is that he brings to Hell all his qualities and passions, good and bad; wherefore Francesca loved, loves, shall love, and can never cease to love. That is why the unhappy woman cannot tear this Paolo from her heart and has him always before her eyes—a sentiment the Poet represents concretely by placing Paolo eternally at her side." "What is all this? Is it joy? Is it sorrow? It is joy and sorrow, it is love and sin, earth and Hell, the bitterness of that love whose wage is Hell, the thrill of that Hell where love still abides. It is a complex emotion that defies expression. It is a living contradiction, the heart in all its mysteries, life in its contrasts it is Heaven and Hell, angel and demon; it is man." (De Sanctis, p. 50) "Their love is as changeless as the storm. A consolation lingers with them through the infinite 'forever.' So in the Poem; and could the soft delaying indulgence of the soul so delay perpetually, the imagination and the will might be almost content to lose Heaven for that." (Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 119)

not a greater severity of punishment, at least a greater amount of passion which tortures them.

In order to understand the lightness of the wind as indicative of the level of torture, we must first examine what the wind represents. *Lussuria* is depicted as a turbulent black wind, violently beating the lovers, which according to *contrapasso* is indicative of the inner turmoil they experience due to the subjugation of reason by passion, their self-indulgence.⁴³ Accordingly with regard to punishment, Singleton (*Commentary*, p. 82) interprets “*e paion sî al vento esser leggier*” as “these two spirits are more violently tossed by the wind than the others are.” According to *contrapasso*, a more violent wind indicates more passion⁴⁴ as well as greater suffering.⁴⁵ So in contrast to De Sanctis’ reading (p. 34), rather than a mitigation of punishment, it seems to indicate an intensification.

Returning now to the myth, we need to take into account the precise punishment of Mars and Aphrodite in order to appreciate what Dante is doing with Francesca and Paolo. Mars and Venus were caught in the act of adultery and fastened together; they became a “comic and cruel thing,” a spectacle for all the gods’ amusement.⁴⁶ Likewise, once Francesca and Paolo’s bodies are returned to them, they will be held together as a

⁴³ “The ‘punishment’ for sin is simply the sin itself, experienced without illusion.” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101-2) “Metaphorically speaking, to renounce reason is to be blind or to live in the dark and hence to lose one’s way. To follow instinct is to be driven by a storm of ever-changing force and direction...[The air] is convulsed by a roaring and turbulent typhoon which is said to ‘beat’, ‘toss’, ‘molest’ and ‘castigate’ them.” (Boyde, p. 293; also see Brandeis, p. 26; Musa, *Commentary*, p. 67; Chiampi, p. 69)

⁴⁴ “According to the principle of just punishment, the heightened violence of the wind signifies that the love, which led them in life and leads them now, was, and is, most passionate.” Agreeing with Singleton’s reading (*Commentary*, p. 82), Masciandaro (p. 72) adds that this lightness is illusory, “This reading is correct only within the field of vision of the allegorist. As it correlates the power of the wind with the exceptional violence of Paolo’s and Francesca’s passion, it fails to capture an important facet of that passion, namely the illusory sense of lightness—the lightness of *flight*. This is an essential component of their inordinate love, one that Dante the Dramatist does not want us to ignore as he develops a scene in which the wayfarer’s response helps reveal the ambiguities of a love that destroys. If the wayfarer (and the reader) saw only the wind as passion—as the allegorist in us and among us is inclined to see—he would have the clear, detached view of the moralist and judge, which is only one facet of Dante’s representation. And if he did not feel the lightness of flight inherent in lust, if he were not *seduced* by it, he would never experience the illusions and ambiguities brought about by the adulteration of love. He would never truly *know* this love.”

⁴⁵ “But the positioning of these two spirits together is part of their punishment...and their appearance as ‘*leggieri*’ implies that they are blown about by the wind more than the others and are therefore probably suffering more.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 73) “They did not resist the impulse of passion, and so they are unable to resist that of the wind.”

⁴⁶ *Odyssey* VIII, 306; also see Lucian, “The Net of Vulcan,” XVII, trans. Tooke, XVII, p. 93; Ovid, *The Art of Love*, II, 580.

spectacle for eternity. What greater punishment could be given to an aristocratic woman like Francesca who is consumed with appearances and the aesthetic, and so eager to please and impress.⁴⁷ Given that Dante as pilgrim is not aware of the corporeal aspect of her punishment, “for a brief moment, with the pilgrim, she could perform, she could pretend, she could be the gracious lady she had been in the beautiful life on earth” (Musa, *Advent*. p. 33).

A significant insight into this punishment is gained through examining Vulcan’s analysis of the punishment and sin.⁴⁸ “Yet I have an idea that they won’t be eager to prolong that embrace, no, not for a moment, not for all their love. Theirs is a sleep that both will soon be tired of” (*Odyssey*, VIII, 305-7). In Homeric times this seems to have indicated simply that they will soon be tired of being imprisoned in this net. From the later Latin view point however Vulcan’s analysis of the situation is that their love which is purely physical is carnal and temporal.⁴⁹ Though not mentioned in Ovid, this point appears in Latin literature through Fulgentius’ reading of the myth (7). Blumenfield-Kosinski (p. 74) writes that Fulgentius “saw in the Venus love affair with Mars ‘valor corrupted by lust,’ stating that Vulcan’s chains represent the fetters of habit.”⁵⁰ Due to the finite and carnal nature of their attraction, their desire will fade when continuity and regularity is imposed upon them. Of greater consequence however is the point that their relation has been made public and humiliating, a source of shame.⁵¹ Vulcan calls Venus a

⁴⁷ Musa, *Advent*, p. 24-7.

⁴⁸ I suspect that Dante had some other access to this myth which is closer to the version of the *Odyssey* than Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Fragments of the original had been translated into Latin or appropriated/integrated by Latin writers. The only element in the original myth of the *Odyssey* that remains outstanding, meaning that I have not found the fragment in Latin prose, is Vulcan’s statement: “I wish I had never been born”.

⁴⁹ Though there are more positive readings of the relationship of Mars and Venus as demonstrated in Statius (see Vessey, *Statius and the Thebaid*, p. 86), these do not come into play in the *Inferno*.

⁵⁰ According to Fulgentius’ *The Mythologies* (7, in *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, trans. L. Whitebread, pp. 72-73; referred also to by Blumenfield-Kosinski, p. 74) after the Sun “reveals the adultery of Venus...she, in her grief, inflamed with love the five daughters of the Sun—that is, Pasiphae, Medea, Phaedra, Circe, and Dirce. Let us look into what the prating poets may allude to by this. Certainly for our present age there remains full evidence of this fable, for valor corrupted by lust becomes clear at the witness of the sun, whereby Ovid in the fifth book of his *Metamorphoses* says: ‘This god was the first to see.’ And this valor corrupted by lust is shamefully held in the fetter-like grip of its ardor. She thus inflamed with love the five daughters of the Sun, that is, the five human senses devoted to light and truth and as if made dark by this corrupting of the Sun’s brood.” In this reading of Venus’ reaction Fulgentius agrees with the reading of *Hyginus Fabulae* 148, “To Sol’s progeny, however, Venus, because of his disclosure, was always hostile” implying that desire always works against the pursuit of truth (pp. 72-73).

⁵¹ Lucian, “The Net of Vulcan”, XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 92-3.

“brazen hussy” and a “slave to her passion,”⁵² indicating the base level of her love regardless of her desire to make it seem otherwise. The utter humiliation of being physically exposed in her sin for everyone to see and mock for all eternity is the greatest single punishment both Venus and Francesca could experience. For Venus this means the lowering of herself from a Heavenly Aphrodite/love to a worldly and common Aphrodite.⁵³ As she is lowered from a Heavenly to an earthly/common Venus in pagan terms, and as pagan terms in Dante are backed with Christian images and meanings which magnify their significance, we can see Francesca in this way as being lowered from Virgin to temptress or Eve figure, a point which was suggested by Bernard Silvestrus’ reading of the pagan myth,⁵⁴ which with regard to Francesca we shall discuss in the next chapter. But taking this one step further, as aristocratic Francesca is mortal and was killed in the act of love and will be “common” forever in that she is maintained

⁵² *Odyssey* VIII, 318-320; Ovid, *The Art of Love*, II, 576.

⁵³ Though full discussions only come in the Renaissance, with the rise of Platonism and the works of Ficino such as his *Commentary on the Symposium*, this double image of love permeates the Judeo-Christian world through the Middle Ages, particularly with the rise of the adoration of the Virgin Mary versus Eve. As Hall (p. 319) writes with regard to Sacred and Profane Love, “The idea of twin Venuses who represent two kinds of love was expressed by the Florentine humanists of the 15th century...The Celestial Venus symbolized love that was aroused by contemplation of the eternal and divine, the Earthly or Common Venus represented the beauty found in the material world, the procreative principle. To the humanists both were virtuous, Venus Vulgaris being regarded as a stage on the way upward to Venus Celestis.”

Against the claim that the notions of Heavenly and Earthly Aphrodite were not in circulation until the Renaissance’s rediscovery of Platonism, I would point to Augustine who through Plotinus along with many other Neo-Platonists, not only made Platonic thought an integral part of the culture but also integrated it to a large extent with church teaching. Its presence is exemplified when Augustine writes (*City of God Against the Pagans*, Vol. II, Book IV. x, p. 42-3), “Or are there two Venuses, one virgin, the other not? Or rather three: one who is also Vesta, a goddess of virgins; another of married women; another of harlots? To the last the Phoenicians used to make a gift of money gained from the prostitution of their daughters before marrying them to husbands. Which of these is the wife of Vulcan? Certainly not the virgin, since she has a husband. Perish the thought, moreover, that it should be the harlot, lest we seem to wrong the son of Juno and fellow-patron with Minerva of the crafts. Therefore it is clear that she is the one concerned with married women, but we don’t want them to imitate her in what she did with Mars. ‘Once more,’ they said, ‘you are going back to the fables.’” With this final gesture he appears to be reacting to the thought that all women are Vesta or harlots, Heavenly or earthly/common Aphrodites, as given the story the third category is tainted with the second. Sadly this polar and immoderate view of women and love has deeply affected Western culture. (See M. Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, *passim*.)

⁵⁴ Bernardus Silvestrus (in *Mythographi Vaticani* I and II, ch. 144, Kulcsar, ed., p. 206); his moral interpretation is present in Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century* (p. 117); “Mars is...a good man corrupted by Venus, and the capture of the pair is made to show ‘how the fire of concupiscence fetters virtue with the unbreakable bond of habit.’” Silvestrus’ understanding of the relation of *eros* and habit within the myth of Mars and Venus is significantly different from that of Fulgentius.

eternally in state of humiliation, this degrades the image of the goddess of love further, making her truly a distortion of the original representation, and a true subject for pity.⁵⁵

Because of their deep humiliation Mars and Venus on the moment of their liberation flee from each other's presence. "The two of them, freed from the shackles that had proved so strong leapt up and fled, Ares to Thrace, and laughter-loving Aphrodite to Paphos in Cyprus" (*Odyssey* VIII, 359-366; also Ovid, *The Art of Love*, II, 561-592). This further suggests that Francesca and Paolo if given the chance would instantly flee in opposite directions, from each other's presence. As Venus flees from Mars or War to a place of peace, "Paphos in Cyprus, where she has her sacred precinct and altar fragrant with incense. There the Graces bathed her and anointed her with imperishable oil that the immortals use" (*Odyssey* VIII, 364-366), so likewise Francesca longs for "*pace*",⁵⁶ to be released from the strife of Hell, but as a damned soul she will never be free.

4. "TOGETHERNESS" AS TORTURE

Few commentators have noticed this implicit desire of Paolo and Francesca to be away from each other, or more precisely that the greatest aspect of their punishment is to be chained together, which perhaps is why they are so light upon the wind. "Many critics, taken in like the Pilgrim by Francesca's smooth talking, have asserted that she and Paolo in their love have 'conquered' Hell because they are still together [see Grandgent, p. 47]. However, their togetherness is certainly a part of their punishment." (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 72) Musa (*Commentary*, p. 32) argues against Grandgent (p. 47) systematically and most convincingly by first pointing out "this would contradict the principles of divine punitive justice as these are reflected throughout the *Inferno*." Why would he make the first sinners the exception? Next he argues that "Eternal togetherness in itself is not necessarily a cause for exaltation,"⁵⁷ but may be the deepest source of unhappiness as it is

⁵⁵ Dante can be understood as doing Francesca honour in a sense as he compares her to the Goddess of Love, but in this sense he is envisioning her as worshipping Eros, and hence not a true Venus; the images do not exactly mesh.

⁵⁶ Grandgent, p. 53. "Her repetition of *pace* (97) recalls simultaneously the external wind that surrounds her now, the internal storm that she carries within her, and the earthly turmoil that was an indirect cause of her downfall." (Shapiro, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 101)

⁵⁷ "Can an eternity of floating on the wind in each other's arms be a punishment for lovers? That is just what their passion, if left to speak for itself, would have chosen. It is what passion stops at and would

the imposition/forced presence,⁵⁸ “the naked body of her dead lover [serving as a]...constant reminder of passion spent, of the sin that condemned them, of shameful exposure and death”.⁵⁹ Thirdly she, dominating the scene, shows no pleasure in Paolo’s presence as demonstrated by the manner in which she impersonally refers to him without addressing him directly,⁶⁰ hence speaking as if she wishes that he were not there.

5. WHERE DOES THE TRUE RESPONSIBILITY LIE?

The only reference to Gianciotto in *Inferno* V is “Caina waits for him who quenched our life” (line 107). Although not a popular reading in general,⁶¹ it has been suggested by Poggioli, Donadoni, Roncaglia and partially Bergin that this especially aggressive line was spoken by Paolo. Given my reading emphasizing Paolo’s relation to Mars and the character of a soldier/warrior, this seems possible though Musa is probably correct in disagreeing with this position.⁶²

gladly prolong for ever. Divine judgement has only taken it at its word...Abandon yourself, Dante would say to us,-- abandon yourself altogether to a love that is nothing but love, and you are in Hell already.” (G. Santayana quoted in Sinclair, pp. 82-3)

⁵⁸ Like Fulgentius’ comment concerning Venus and Mars with regard to the end of love through its imposition of habit, Brandeis (p. 31-32) writes, “That *amor* of which Francesca says ‘even now it leaves me not’, has become through their living embrace utterly barren.”

⁵⁹ Musa, *Advent*, p. 32; also p. 76; also see Barbi, *Dante*, p. 172; Musa, *Commentary*, p. 72.

⁶⁰ “Nor during the scene where Francesca holds the center of the stage does she give the slightest indication of enjoying the presence of her lover. We have already seen how Paolo is immediately eclipsed as soon as she begins to speak.” (Musa, *Advent*, p. 32) “The ever-silent, weeping Paolo is surely not happy with their state, and Francesca coolly alludes to him with the impersonal ‘that one’ (*costui*) or ‘this one’ (*questi*) as she speaks; she never mentions him by name.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 72)

Cambon (p. 49) gives an alternative reading: “Paolo is her man, not this legal husband who married her almost by proxy and for political reasons; and Paolo arose first in her speech, in connection with love. Even him she refrains from naming directly; he is referred to as ‘*costui*’. Modesty again, intensified by love; but note how qualitatively different that gestural pronoun is from the frozen impersonality of ‘*chi*’.”

⁶¹ Bergin (“The Women of the *Comedy*” in *An Approach to Dante*, p. 84) finds “the suggestion, originally made by E. Roncaglia and picked up by Donadoni [‘Le tre donne della *Commedia*’ in *Studi danteschi e manzoniani*, Florence, 1963, p. 80], that it may more correctly be assigned to Paolo, very appealing. But the notion has not met with general favor.”

⁶² Musa does not hold this position. “According to Roncaglia (1876), this verse is spoken not by Francesca but by Paolo. His support for this reading is the plural pronoun *lor* in the following verse (‘*Queste parole da lor ci fuor porte*’) and the fact that the vindictive tone of the words befits Paolo more than the gentle Francesca. However, in lines 115-116, the Pilgrim turns to ‘them’ before addressing Francesca in the singular; and as to Francesca’s ‘gentle’ nature, the ambiguities in her character have already been noted.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 79) In his book *Advent at the Gates* (p. 138) with regard to Poggioli’s view that Paolo speaks line 328-239, Musa responds “But even though the use of the plural pronoun must be ‘explained away’ if Francesca has been the only speaker (compare also line 109: *Quand’io intesi*

Paolo's tears at the end of the canto correspond to Lucian's description of Mars' reaction to his entrapment in Vulcan's net, a reaction not mentioned in the *Odyssey*. According to Lucian⁶³, "the gallant for a while thought he could tear the net and save himself by flight; but, perceiving that to be impossible, had recourse to entreaties." First he lashes out violently, employing physical strength to break the net. Failing he "had recourse to entreaties", pleaded and begged. At this point Mars was released, however Paolo was never released. Dante, therefore, seems to be showing the result of the process of a certain character type begun by Mars and mirrored by Paolo which ends with the degeneration of the image in Paolo and his "masculinity". After recognizing the ultimate futility of his state, and being without hope he begins to cry piteous tears.

This gives insight into why Paolo is portrayed as a weakling crying and overshadowed by Francesca.⁶⁴ Having depended upon his physical appearance and strength, he did not have maturity or strength of character. This image of Paolo also shows him to be the degeneration of the image of the warrior and a poor reflection of Mars, unmasculine and undivine.

Returning to the line "Caina waits for him who quenched our life" (107), Musa reads this not as Francesca's awareness of the section of Hell Caina, but as a reference to Cain who killed Abel.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, whatever Francesca's awareness, from the point of view of the reader, Dante here presents Francesca as thrusting Gianciotto to the third lowest level of Hell, near the level of Judas. This is clearly appropriate as Cain killed his brother Abel, the first example of murder and fratricide in Genesis 4:10; "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." Likewise Gianciotto murdered both his brother

quell'anime offense..'), still, what has been proposed to justify the literal interpretation of *da lor* is surely unacceptable: it would imply incredible carelessness on the part of the narrator (who would have failed to announce the change from one speaker to another); moreover, if the hitherto mute Paolo would suddenly chime in, this would offer a comically melodramatic conclusion to the deeply moving words of Francesca."

⁶³ Lucian, "The Net of Vulcan", XVII, trans. Tooke, p. 93.

⁶⁴ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 83; Poggioli, p. 73-74.

⁶⁵ "I have accepted the variant '*Caino*,' meaning the biblical figure Cain, as opposed to the standard reading of '*Caina*', the region in the lowest part of Hell wherein are tormented those souls who betrayed their kin (see Petrocchi II, 90). The reason is simple: how would Francesca know about this section of Hell? She would know, however, the biblical story of Cain, who slew his brother Abel, and would make the connection with Paolo, murdered by his older brother, Gianciotto." (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 79) Carroll (p. 99) thinks he is referring to the Circle of Traitors and concludes "Probably the reason why Dante condemns him to the Circle of Traitors is that he knew of some element of treachery in his conduct towards them, although it is unknown to us." (Carroll, p. 99)

and wife implying that the two like Abel are “innocent”,⁶⁶ which Francesca deceiving herself maintains to be true, though in fact she is more like Eve as we shall soon see. Therefore Francesca depicts Gianciotto as an unrepentant tyrant, remaining insensitive to the injustice he has done. The reader may well ponder whether this condemnation is wholly without warrant, for though having been gravely sinned against, he remains ethically responsible for the way he has responded to the sins of Paolo and Francesca, giving them no opportunity for repentance. For this reason is not Gianciotto on some level also responsible for the damnation of Francesca and Paolo?

6. CONCLUSION

According to the Aristophanes of the *Symposium*, *eros* seeks eternal union with the beloved, for two to become one. However Dante, through his clever manipulation and identification of Francesca and Paolo with Venus and Mars, shows how such a carnal union in which *eros* is sought as an end in itself and is not controlled (in the sense of moderated), or is focused upon a prohibited desired object, ultimately becomes profoundly undesirable. Not only does it result in sheer humiliation and the revelation of moral depravity in that all else is given up for its sake, but it leads to complete degeneration and destruction, not only for Francesca and Paolo but also for Gianciotto as it creates the condition for his own sin, resulting in their damnation, and, possibly, his own. Simply put, the *telos* of purely physical *eros* sought as an end in itself, i.e., pleasure, and as the absolute good of the soul, is Hell. Considering that Aristophanes’ myth articulates a desire for wholeness present in every human being though not restricted to the physical, this is a sobering Christian warning and judgement of *eros* gone wrong for all, including the Platonist.

⁶⁶ “The words ‘afflicted souls’ echo Francesca’s ‘*e ‘l modo ancor m’offende*’ (‘and the way of it afflicts me still’). By adopting her language and her perspective, and by imitating them, he creates a space which is shared not only by the wayfarer and Francesca, but also by the reader. At least momentarily, we are invited to see Paolo and Francesca as souls who have been wronged, and therefore as victims of a power that is external and ineluctable, much like, as we have already observed, the power of the Hellish hurricane that smites them without rest.” (Masciandaro, p. 85)

XI.

FALLING FOR FRANCESCA

Having seen how Dante used the pagan myth of Mars and Venus to articulate the death of Francesca and Paolo so that Francesca is made to epitomize earthly Venus/Aphrodite, we shall now look at the opposite side of the coin, Dante's Christian reading of the event into which the pagan analogy is funnelled. In the Christian reading, which for Dante is central, Francesca is an Eve-figure.

In order to appreciate the subtlety and precision of Dante's representation of Francesca as temptress, an Eve figure, we shall turn to the Fall of Man in Genesis which Dante follows and uses in the pattern of *Inferno* V to enact the fall of Dante under Francesca's influence. In Genesis 2: 15, after placing Adam in Eden, God warns Adam not to "eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Yet later the serpent tempts and deceives Eve, calling into question God's integrity and motivations (3:4-5), after which she eats from the tree as does Adam (3:5), an act for which they do not take responsibility (3:12-13), ultimately resulting in their exile (3:23-24) and death. Given this story, we shall now examine how Dante employs the pattern/sequence of events in Genesis to present Francesca as an Eve-figure tempting and causing Dante to fall.

1. THE WARNING

Echoing Genesis 2:17 in which God warns Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge, moments before the meeting with Francesca and Paolo, Minos warns Dante as he stands before him, "O thou that comest to the abode of pain....look how thou enterest and in whom thou trustest; let not the breadth of the entrance deceive thee". (V, 16-20) However in contrast to the Judeo-Christian God, Minos the judge of Hell (V, 4-15), no longer holding his honourable role as the judge of the dead in the *Odyssey* XI, the *Gorgias* 524-526 and the *Aeneid* VI,¹ in the *Commedia* is "a hideous demon"² judging

¹ Grandgent, p. 46; Durling, p. 94; "Minos in legend and myth was a king of ancient Crete, son of Zeus and Europa, and brother of Rhadamanthus. In assigning to Minos the office of judge in Hell, Dante imitates

and damning the *mal nata*³ on their own confessions.⁴ Though the symbol of an “evil conscience”,⁵ Minos directly warns Dante to pay attention to how he enters and in whom he puts his trust. While Dante gains access to Hell through having it decreed by God (V, 23-4) and is aided by the three Ladies (II, 53-114) (echoing *Aeneid* VI, 461-2 where Aeneas’ journey to Avernus is also “a decree of the gods”), Minos’ warning implies the possibility of being deceived into trusting that which should not be trusted, that which will endanger and damage Dante spiritually.

This warning has been interpreted in two ways. Firstly, a fall may be caused by an over-dependency on reason (in the *Commedia* imaged by Virgil).⁶ However as this possibility seems unlikely, he seems to be referring to the subversion of reason under the influence of one of “the sinners in this circle”.⁷ It would seem, then, that Minos’ warning

Virgil (*Aeneid*, VI, 432-33): “*Quaesitor Minos urnam movet; ille silentum/ conciliumque vocat, vitasque et crimina discit.*” (Minos, presiding, shakes the urn; ’tis he calls a court of the silent, and learns men’s lives and misdeeds.)” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 74).

² Grandgent, p. 46. Minos demonstrates a tendency in medieval Christianity to demonize some dignified classical figures and gods (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101; Sinclair, p. 81, also see Carroll, p. 85 and 1 Corinth. X, 20). Others, like “the Muses and Apollo were to [Dante] simply allegorical figures, while Jove apparently represented the ancient poets’ dim conception of the Supreme Being”. (Grandgent, p. 46) O’Grady considers this “transformation of the dignified judge of the Tartarus of the *Aeneid* into a monstrous brute, which apart from symbolizing loss of intellect, represents the reversal of order, passing judgement, as he does, with his tail rather than his head.” (O’Grady, p. 75)

³ Singleton notes that the damned are the “*Mal nata*” a name suggesting that “it would be better for them not to have been born” as in Matt. 26: 24. He also refers to *Vita Nuova* XIX.8 for ‘*O, malnati*’ and *Paradiso* V, 115 for ‘*bene nato*’, those destined for Heaven. (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 75)

⁴ Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101.

⁵ Though standing at the entrance to the circle of the lustful, Minos is not a symbol of sensuality but of the “evil conscience” (Carroll, p. 84), or “the guilty conscience” (Grandgent, p. 46) or “an accusing conscience” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101). This is explainable in that Minos may well represent the “horrible and distorted conception of the justice of God” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 66), which is one of the main punishments of the hardened “impenitent and despairing conscience.” (Carroll, p. 86; Sinclair, p. 81) For the “acoustic imitation of the growling sound”, see Musa, *Commentary*, p. 65.

⁶ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 66. Given Dante has entered the circle of the lustful and as lust is the subjection of reason to desire, it is unlikely that Minos is warning Dante not to trust reason, unless he is trying to trap Dante in Hell by convincing him abandon himself to desire.

⁷ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 66. From this second interpretation immediately the question arises: Can the inhabitants of Hell deceive and lie? The soul “confesses all” before Minos (V, 8), and are “damned on their own confession... Hell being the place of self-knowledge in sin...[means] there can be no more self-deception here,” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101; though perhaps “confusion” see Musa in *Advent*). Although this question is left open for the moment, later we see the potency of Minos’ warning and that it is directed at Francesca. In contrast to Foscolo’s discussion of the “truthfulness [which] beautifies her confession of desire,” and Renato Poggioli who thinks Francesca “has given proof of intellectual and moral courage by facing the truth in all its nakedness,” (Musa, *Advent*. p. 339), for O’Grady (p. 76) “the true confession to Minos is followed by a false confession by Francesca, which is an attempt at self-justification. This could indicate that this circle is the home of lust thriving on flattery and falsehood. One thus comprehends the weight of Minos’ warning to Dante”.

to watch “in whom thou trust” refers to Francesca, indicative of trusting his passion over reason and hinting at Dante’s susceptibility towards the coming temptation, a beautiful poetically articulate woman, and his subsequent fall.⁸

Resembling Adam listening to Eve in Genesis 3:17, from the beginning Dante’s weakness, like that of Francesca, is the subjugation of reason by desire, the definition of which is *lussuria* or *cupiditas*, the “first sin of incontinence”, the circle of Hell into which he has just entered.⁹ The image of the lustful blown in the wind¹⁰ resembles the comparison of the wicked with chaff in Psalm 1:4; “Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.”¹¹ Though the sin of concupiscence might seem to suggest the prohibition of sexuality, the reason for the condemnation of the lustful is that they lacked self-control with regard to their passion¹² and subjugate their “reason to desire.” (V, 39)¹³

⁸ As a concluding remark, Minos states “let not the breadth of the entrance deceive thee”. (V, 20) This invokes both a Biblical and Classical reference. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction” Matt. VII, 13. In slightly different words, Virgil (*Aeneid*, VI, 126-7) writes “*Facilis descensus Averno: noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis*” (Easy is the descent to Avernus: night and day the door of gloomy Dis stands open). Grandgent notes this connection which Singleton (p. 66) uses in his commentary. “Since the entrance to Hell proper is here where Minos stands as judge and there is in fact no portal at all, the ‘entrance’ is indeed wide.” (Grandgent is concerned with the *Aeneid* while Singleton focuses on both the Bible and *Aeneid*.) Though Dante does consider himself to be unrelated to the condition of the damned, a visitor or tourist as distinct from a resident in Hell, “familiarity with sin is easy...[as] ‘the amplitude of the entrance’ is great, [and]... the very contemplation of evil may leave unsuspected stains upon the soul” (see *Purg.* I, 121). If Dante walks carelessly and allows himself to be influenced, he may very well slip and be trapped and consumed.

⁹ Grandgent, p. 46.

¹⁰ V, 28-38, 82-4, Durling, p. 96.

¹¹ For Durling, this image describes the sin of lust indicative of the principle of *contrapasso* which essentially means “whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.” (Matt. 5: 38, 7:2, Galatians 6: 7; Exodus 21:23,24; Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19: 21) *Contrapasso* or counter-suffering “translates the Latin *contrapassum*, a rendition of the Greek *antipeponthos* in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.5.1132b, part of a discussion of retaliation as a form of justice. Aquinas uses the term for the biblical law of retribution (*lex talionis*): *Summa Theologica*, 2a 2ae, q. 61, a. 4.” (Durling, p. 448)

¹² For Sinclair (p. 81), “they have sown the wind and forever reap the whirlwind.” (For discussions of weakness of will see Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101; concupiscence see Brandeis, p. 191; for the purging of lust in *Purg.* XXV, XXVI, see Carroll, p. 98; and in *Paradiso* IX.118 “within the shadow of the earth...[as] a darkness upon the joy of Heaven” see Carroll, p. 98.)

¹³ There is some debate as to whether Dante is condemning passion. For Masciandaro, (p. 67), given the “God-given passion...[which] He endows on his creatures,” “it is not passion that is condemned in Hell’s second circle but its adulteration, or the inordinate way in which the lustful have let it become an all-powerful, unbridled force that has blinded them to all other forces and other goods, by obfuscating the light of their intellect.” Sinclair (p. 81) finds that “there is nothing in Dante’s treatment of these carnal sinners of the false and unchristian condemnation of sexual motive which has sometimes obtained in the Church’s teaching.” Presumably he is thinking of clergymen like Gregory the Great, Hugo St. Victor, Peter Lombard and Albertus Magnus who views desire as evil (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 15), so that as Lombard quotes, *omnis ardentior amator propriae uxoris adulter est*, passionate love of a man’s own wife is adultery or as Lewis

This implies that moral reason in a specific area is frozen.¹⁴ In *Inferno* V, as we shall soon see, a key point of surrender in which desire subjugates reason, the kiss, marks the moment when Paolo and Francesca's relationship transgressed the social and moral order leading to adultery (Exodus 20: 14) and to incest (Leviticus 18: 16), neither of which Francesca acknowledges to be a sin given that the relationship is her "moral blind spot"¹⁵ which in turn blinded and corrupted the whole.¹⁶ Thus the lives of Paolo and Francesca, "spoiled by love [demonstrate that]... love, pitted against reason, inevitably destroys" (Brandeis, p. 27), ironically validating Francesca's statement that love (at least her kind) leads to death, a problem set up in *Inferno* V to which Beatrice will respond.¹⁷

Given this similarity and susceptibility to fall, Dante the pilgrim has fallen even before he falls.¹⁸ From among these spirits for whom Dante already felt compassion (V,

(*Allegory of Love*, pp. 17-18) writes "the ardent lover even of his own wife is in mortal sin". However, while Nardi ("*Filosofia dell'Amore*", pp. 90-1) believes Dante does to some extent condemn passion, Shapero (*Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 79) says that "Dante does not directly condemn women or sex in general in the vehement manner of Church Fathers or troubadours," but attempts to "resolve the resulting anguish." (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 85)

However Paolo and Francesca's particular sin is not with regard to "natural sexual desire but because they 'subject reason to desire,'" (Sinclair, p. 81), a position likewise held by Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae, Prima Secundae, XXXIV, Art. 1*; also see *Summa Theologiae, I, 92. Art. I* and Lewis, *Allegory*, pp. 16-17) and typical of Dante's period. Though Dante is extremely passionate spiritually (*caritas*), he maintains some reserve concerning physical desire, partially justifying Shapero's reading with regard to his uneasiness concerning passionate sexual relationships. This also supports his Thomist bent though differing from Aquinas in his image of women which is far more positive than Shapero (*Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 85) admits.

¹⁴ For the medusa-like quality of the beloved, see Brandeis, p. 177-8; also Dante's poem "*Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro*" from *Rimes* II. 35-7, pp. 167-8: "Dante describes his love for the so-called Donna Petra [Medusa] as an experience of spiritual degradation that threatens to transform the lover into stone." "Dante clearly implies the absolute corruption of the intellect or, since *mens* is the faculty of intellectual vision, the darkening of reason by the fleshly sight of the Medusa." (Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 163)

¹⁵ To say that they have "subjected reason to desire" does not mean that they are "deprived of reason" but that the subject of their desire represents a "moral blind spot" so that "the sense, the bearings, the connections of things escape them, so that they grasp eagerly for what hurts them. Thus it is in their minds that they are blind—limitedly but persistently—in the area of their own good. They may know the technical reason for their torment, but the real reason eludes them", as does the shape of the moral framework and how Hell is situated in it. (Brandeis, pp. 172-3)

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:18-9 discusses "being darkened in their understanding". Musa (*Commentary*, p. 68) describes how "lusts of the mind sink men to a deeper perdition than those of the flesh" though they may not be intentionally selfish (Carroll, p. 84; also see Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 101, Durling, p. 95 and Brandeis, p. 179).

¹⁷ "This is almost the opposite of the view, implicit in so much romantic love poetry, that it is precisely passion which purifies..[It is also] the scholastic picture of unfallen sexuality—a picture of physical pleasure to the maximum and emotional disturbance at the minimum." (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 17)

¹⁸ For Musa, when Virgil identifies the damned according to their transgressions of lust and incest which should provoke righteous indignation and terror, Dante deeply moved calls them those "whom love parted from our life" referring to them nostalgically as '*donne antiche e' cavalieri*.' ("knights and ladies of old

72), he noticed Paolo and Francesca who “go together and seem so light upon the wind.” Virgil tells Dante the pilgrim to “entreat them then by the love that leads them, and they will come” (V, 77-8), to which Dante filled with pity¹⁹ calls, “O wearied souls, come and speak to us, if One forbids it not” (V, 80-1).²⁰ Though not summoning them in the name of *Amor*, “a force or an authority that lies outside and above the lovers” (Masciandaro, p. 77) which “leads them” in their passion, Dante “speaks to them with passionate intensity” conveying compassion, feeling for their pain through putting himself in their place and thereby feeling their passion, which in this context produces pity, appealing indeed “to their self-pity” (Masciandaro, pp. 75-77). In this way he speaks the language of *Amor*²¹ and of courtly love²², their language, thereby following Virgil’s advice though on a deeper level.²³

To the compassion of Dante²⁴, Francesca and Paolo respond passionately like “doves, summoned by desire”, and immediately glide towards them as if returning to the comfort of their nests. Francesca lovingly responds “O living creature gracious and friendly²⁵....thou hast pity on our evil plight” (88-93). In this way “by their tone, by their adjectives—‘*grazioso*’ and ‘*benigno*’—by their use of the intimate *tu*, they cradle the stranger’s instant pity and they suggest in Francesca a rather quick compliancy” (Brandeis, p. 28), her susceptibility to passion which like Eve’s transgressions led to her damnation. This Dante further responds to with pity identifying himself with her and

times”) so that “pity came upon [him] and [he] was as one bewildered” (V, 72). Then Dante unobjective and “emotionally distraught” refers to Virgil as “*poeta*’...the sublime singer of the tragic love of Dido for Aeneas.” His pity is partially self-referential as he too is a love poet. (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 72)

¹⁹ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 75.

²⁰ By stating ‘*O amine affannate*’ and ‘*s’altri nol niega*’—“Dante represents a reduction to *pathos* and pity of what is essentially a conflictual condition, one in which human passion and pity are set against the fear associated with God and His judgment” (Masciandaro, p. 76). We see this same awareness of God moments later in Francesca’s utterance, “If God were our friend.” De Sanctis (pp. 42-43) interprets this as piety, the beginning of a prayer, while Musa as we shall later discuss interprets it as Francesca blaming God for her present state of damnation.

²¹ Brandeis, p. 27.

²² Boyde, p. 295, note 46.

²³ For Masciandaro, (p. 77) they speak the “language of *pathos* and pity.” In this context, in Hell, pity is the language of love and as De Sanctis (p. 50) writes Dante is the “muse [of] Pity.”

²⁴ Brandeis, p. 27.

²⁵ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 76.

loving her as a kindred soul mirroring himself²⁶ (Genesis 2:23), which in turn we identify with as a reflection of our inner selves.²⁷

2. AMOR, AMOR, AMOR

In Genesis 3:4-5, the serpent twisted God's instruction calling into question God's will, integrity and therefore his identity, thereby leading Eve and through her Adam away from God. Likewise Francesca in her first speech employs the conflict between courtly love and medieval Christianity, to which Dante has split allegiance, to lure Dante the pilgrim from the Christian God of love, "God as *caritas*", to the pagan god *Amor* of courtly love.²⁸

In order to win over the pilgrim she begins by establishing her original home to be a type of Paradisal state, echoing Eden of Genesis 1:31 and 2:25. By saying "the city where I was born lies on the shore where the Po, with streams that join it, descends to rest" (V, 99),²⁹ Francesca portrays it as a lost paradise,³⁰ indicating that she once possessed what she falsely conceived to be a time of total peace.³¹ The three tercets following, according to this logic, will describe her fall from paradise and thus the story of her demise. Through this story however she seduces not only Dante, as we shall see,

²⁶ Brandeis, p. 28.

²⁷ De Sanctis pp. 40-41. By Dante her creator, "Francesca is given Dante's tenderness, his literary sensibility and his capacity for sexual love". (Boyde, p. 292)

²⁸ Dante uses the conflict between the tradition of courtly love, which involves a devotion to *Amor*, and the medieval Christian tradition in order to enable Francesca to win the pilgrim Dante's further compassion. As we have seen in the "The Venus of Rimini", Dante has represented Francesca as the imitator and follower of the pagan goddess Venus, mother of *Amor* who is always in her company. This suggests that Francesca is a follower of both as Francesca while representing earthly Venus, embodies earthly *eros*, so that in leading Dante away from the Christian God, who "is *caritas*", she will lead him towards the pagan god *Amor* of courtly love. As Dante is a Christian thinker he is employing this pagan symbolism to serve very precise Christian ends which in the case of Francesca is the analysis of her tactics, an elucidation of her sin and explanation for the reason for her damnation, which in turn serves as a critique of contemporary society's tradition of courtly love.

²⁹ The use of *pace* articulates the tension between courtly love and Christianity. Singleton ("From Love to *Caritas*", p. 68) notes that the last word of the *Vita Nuova* is *pace*, so that he sees it as closing in "a prayer for peace". This *pace* is an impossibility for Francesca (Cambon, p. 65) given that the true end of peace lies not in the creation following the dictum of courtly love but in God alone (*Paradiso* III, 85; Augustine, *Confessions* XIII, 9,10; Masciandaro, p. 82-4). Furthermore *pace* conflicts with courtly love in that *amor* involves unsatisfied desire which if satisfied would destroy the virtue in love and cause his poetic inspiration to cease. (Singleton, "From Love to *Caritas*", p. 68)

³⁰ R. Dragonetti, "L'Episode", p. 101.

³¹ Masciandaro, p. 83.

but also most who hear it into a false sense of security and peace, through the musicality and rhythm of the tercets which Boyde (p. 297) compares to waves whose repetition eventually “smashes through our emotional defenses.” Boyde’s analogy, one notes, suggests Francesca as Siren.

When Francesca states in line 100: *Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende*, particularly through the expression ‘*cor gentil*’, she speaks the language of courtly love articulated by Guinizelli.³² While Boyde (p. 297) thinks line 100 “stops short of asserting the *identity* of love and the gentle heart”, Poggioli (pp. 68-9) believes this repeats the central message of the *Dolce Stil Novo* affirming an identity of the *cor gentil* and *fino Amore*³³, suggesting a paradisaal state.

However in the second tercet we see a shift out of the doctrine of love of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. *Amor* which kindled Paolo’s heart due to its gentleness “*gentilezza*”, “seized this one for the beauty of my body, torn from me” (*prese costui de la bella persona che mi fu tolta* (V, 100-102)).³⁴ Significantly, *Amor* seized him for Francesca’s “*bella persona*” or beautiful body. “The reference ‘*bella persona*’ implies physical rather than spiritual qualities” (O’Grady, p. 81-2).³⁵ Here we find a significant point of deviation from the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*³⁶ which focuses, as in the case of Guinizelli, upon

³² The Bolognese poet Guido Guinizelli, one of the founders of the *Dolce Stil Novo* whom Dante called the “sage” (*Vita Nuova* 20) and “my father” (*Purgatorio* 26: 97) wrote “‘*Al cor gentil reppaira sempre Amore/ come l’ausello in selva a la verdura*’ (‘Love always repairs to the gentle heart, as the bird in the wood to the verdure’)” (Durling, p. 97). Love, from birth in a “potential form” in the noble/virtuous heart, is awakened by the sight of the beautiful, reminiscent of *Phaedrus* 253-255. (Grandgent, p. 53; Boyde, p. 290, 297)

³³ “*Amor ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende*” echoes and replicates Guinizelli’s “*Al cor gentil ripara sempre Amore*” which according to Poggioli (p. 68-9) Dante paraphrases in “*Amore e il cor gentil sono una cosa*” [Love is one with the gentle heart] of *Vita Nuova* XX, 3-5. Francesca’s speech is “a tissue of allusions to the fashionable poetry of love, including Dante’s own early poems” (Durling, p. 97).

³⁴ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 89.

³⁵ Musa (*Commentary*, p. 76) notes Francesca’s physical “*O animal grazioso e benigno*” as opposed to Beatrice’s spiritual greeting “*O anima cortese mantovana*” (*Paradiso*, II, 58).

³⁶ “The *Dolce Stil Nuovo* tradition expresses an intellectualization of love, a fusion of sacred and profane concepts, and presents woman, the object of love, as a spiritual creature. The woman, in this tradition, actualizes the potential of love in the lover. The intellect abstracts from the sensible forms conveyed to it and presents them to the will, which is free to accept or reject. The result is that the well-disposed individual, in possession of a *cor gentile*, falls in love, from which there follows the moral and intellectual improvement of the lover. The angelic qualities of the lady eventually lead him to God. This is the effect of Beatrice on Dante. Her situation bestows grace. It renders man more perfect.” (O’Grady, p. 81)

Nardi (“*Filosofia dell’Amore*”, p. 86) and Poggioli (p. 67), like O’Grady (p. 81) and Musa (*Commentary*, p. 78) believe that it is incorrect to think of Francesca as supporting the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. This is particularly true for Poggioli (p. 67) given her highly constructed and conventional style as opposed to Dante (*Purg.* XXIV. 52-4) who writes *io mi son un che quando Amore spira noto, ed a quel modo, che*

the idealization of women, the *donna angelica*,³⁷ thereby leading man to virtuous as opposed to carnal love (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 78). By Paolo's preoccupation with her body, he shows his love to be the latter, *concupiditas*. Thus Francesca, though appearing linguistically to support the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, distorts and reverses it philosophically (O'Grady, p. 74),³⁸ a distortion accentuated by a gender reversal.³⁹

This reversal of *fin Amor* with *fol Amor* through Francesca's misuse and conflation of two mutually exclusive concepts of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* brings into question whether her misreading is due to carelessness, confusion, deceit or self-deception⁴⁰. Given that it is a repeated pattern⁴¹ as we shall see, it suggests a certain "moral ambiguity" in Francesca.⁴²

Paolo's love may be reciprocated in like kind. "Love, which exempts no loved one from loving in return, seized me for his charms" (V, 103) The term "*piacer*" (V, 104) like "*plazer*", the Provencal term for "attraction" and "charm" (Grandgent, p. 54)⁴³ suggests a physical attraction. However *piacer* may also mean pleasure, the pleasure Paolo took from Francesca's *bella persona*, his love for her beauty.⁴⁴ "Neither meaning can be ruled out, since the poetic ambiguity can support one or the other" (Singleton,

ditta dentro vo significando. [I am one who takes not when love inspires me and expresses it as it is written within me]. Poggioli further notes that her speech shares more common traits with Provencal poetry and the Troubadours. He suggests the influence "not from the tradition of the poetry of love (*versi d'Amore*), either in the *lingua del si* or the *langue d'hoc*, but from the tradition of love fiction (*prose di romanzi*) in the *langue d'oil*. After all, the name 'Francesca' means nothing else but 'French'." (Poggioli, p. 70)

³⁷ When comparing Francesca to the *donna angelica* we must first note that Francesca's *Amor* leads not to "a new quality of life" but to death in contrast with the *Vita Nuova*. "In the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* tradition the lady chooses the man, who is predisposed towards love and goodness. He, in turn, is attracted to the lady, because of the divine and intellectual light communicated through her eyes and her salutation. Francesca, on the contrary, implies that Paolo chose her. The reference '*bella persona*' implies physical rather than spiritual qualities. The poetic beautification of Francesca entails the substitution of poetic qualities for those spiritual qualities necessary for salvation. The power of the will is diminished with the elimination of the spiritual and the intellectual. Furthermore, the commentary on love is provided by Francesca, rather than by Paolo, as would have been the case in the medieval tradition." (O'Grady, p. 74) In short Francesca distorts the idea of the *donna angelica* held by Guinizelli and the other poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*.

³⁸ Francesca use of *gentilizza* (nobility) of heart opposes the view held by Dante and Guinizelli in that she refers to gentility of blood as opposed to virtue. (Poggioli, p. 68-9)

³⁹ This reversal of roles involves the woman praising *Amor* (O'Grady, p. 74) and the good looks of her lover (Poggioli, p. 67).

⁴⁰ Musa, *Advent*. pp. 26-7.

⁴¹ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 78.

⁴² Musa, *Commentary*, p. 76.

⁴³ "*Piacer*' probably is intended to correspond to the '*bella persona*' of vs. 101. Thus Paolo falls in love with the beautiful Francesca, and Francesca falls in love with the handsome Paolo" (See Barbi, pp. 10-11 quoted in Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 91).

⁴⁴ Brandeis, p. 29; Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 91.

Commentary, p. 91). From the latter reading Chiampi (p. 59-60) suggests that “Francesca loves herself and her body as an absolute and loves them through Paolo’s eyes”,⁴⁵ which is either a form of self-love,⁴⁶ or may mean that she honestly loves the fact she pleases him, that she loves to please.⁴⁷ Whether carnal love, *fol amor* (see Chiampi, pp. 59-60), self-love, or desiring to please, all are focused on the surface⁴⁸ and temporal as opposed to the eternal, and easily corrupted resulting in her demise. Thus though following Guinizzelli in the first tercet, Francesca’s second tercet shows her misreading Guinizzelli’s poetry (and Capellanus’ philosophy), twisting Guinizzelli’s *donna angelica* to her own ends.

A Religion unto Themselves

“Love, which exempts no loved one from loving in return” (V, 103) indicates that Francesca had no choice and necessarily loved Paolo in return. Given this “imperious law” (Musa, *Advent*, p. 26) their mutual love was inevitable and unavoidable, as “the nature of the love that inspired them was beyond reproach” (Musa, *Advent*, pp. 26-27),⁴⁹ a position which is later rebutted by Virgil.⁵⁰

Seen thus, Francesca’s view is that *Amor* is an all powerful and irresistible god.⁵¹ This view finds its source in courtly love poetry,⁵² a point which she emphasizes by beginning each tercet with *Amor* showing herself to be his votary,⁵³ and also which she “[asserts] with pride”⁵⁴ regardless of where she finds herself because of this allegiance.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ She therefore experiences great sorrow in their loss. She is “obsessed with memories of her destroyed beauty” (Chiampi, p. 59), the loss of which signifies death (De Sanctis, p. 44).

⁴⁶ Her tendency to be self-focused is demonstrated in that “she interprets Dante’s journey as a ‘visit’ to herself and Paolo alone.” (Masciandaro, pp. 78-9)

⁴⁷ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 77.

⁴⁸ Brandeis, p. 29.

⁴⁹ The possibility of blaming *Amor* is already present in the *Aeneid*. “Virgil had run the risk of deceiving his less sophisticated readers by attributing the onset of Dido’s fatal passion to the activity of Cupid.” (Boyde, p. 282)

⁵⁰ Francesca acted by free choice and is therefore responsible. Cf. *Inferno* V: 103 with *Purgatorio* XVIII, 62-6 and XXII: 10-12. See Durling, p. 97 and Brandeis, pp. 29-31.

⁵¹ Boyde, pp. 280-281. This necessity in love is a position Dante never held. In contrast late in life he held a position similar to *Phaedrus* 252e-253b (See Boyde, p. 298).

⁵² Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 89.

⁵³ Cambon, p. 57.

⁵⁴ Boyde, pp. 280-281.

⁵⁵ E.G. Parodi, cited by Sinclair, p. 83.

Yet as we have seen courtly love both appropriates and opposes Christianity. Though in 1 John 4: 8 “God is *caritas*,” the pagan devotion to *Amor*, opposes and is antithetical to Christianity. With application directly to line 103, “Francesca’s second law of love echoes a dictum which the cult of courtly love characteristically had taken over from Christian doctrine....1 John 4:19 ...‘Let us therefore love, because God first loved us’...[upon which] Fra Giordano da Rivalto sermonizes (*Prediche* XLV, 1831 edn., vol. II, p. 78): ‘*Non e nullo che, sentendosi che sia amato da alcuno, ch’egli non sia tratto ad amar lui incontanente.*’ (‘There is no one who, feeling himself loved, will not immediately feel drawn to love in return.’)” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 90-1) Singleton further notes that this is twisted through medieval culture into an ambiguous statement exemplified by Andreas Capellanus, the Chaplain in *De Amore* II, 8 (p. 311): ‘*Amor nil posset Amori denegare.*’ (‘Love can deny nothing to love.’) which regardless of any religious pretence,⁵⁶ ultimately serves the end of courtly love and its cult of *Amor* as exemplified in Francesca’s second tercet.

As previously mentioned, the “Love religion” of the god *Amor* arises in opposition to the Christian religion, by parodying it.⁵⁷ In this way courtly love formulates an opposing system imitating Christianity⁵⁸ but with an opposing set of values in that the central object of love is the Lady as opposed to the Christian God, so that the ephemeral is placed above the infinite which is an absurdity. We noted in Chapter X Chiampì’s analysis (p. 72) in relation to the image of the union of Francesca and Paolo likened to Aristophanes’ circular people. Looking more deeply here we see Francesca following the “religion of courtly love” as a devotee of *Amor* (and unaware of the humour/absurdity behind the original conception).

Before demonstrating how Francesca’s devotion to *Amor* parodies medieval Christianity, we must first better understand in what this devotion consists. In devoting herself to *Amor* she claims that she and Paolo are possessed by love for each other which by its very nature cannot be refused, as it is willed by *Amor* (as exemplified by Dido in *Aeneid* IV: 93-98). In succumbing to this love they love each other before God, being

⁵⁶ “‘*Quum igitur omnia sequantur ex Amore nefanda*’ (No man through any good deeds can please God so long as he serves in the service of Love).” (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 41).

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Lewis, *Allegory*, pp. 21-22.

fully devoted to each other first and foremost. Paolo is unconditionally devoted to Francesca's "*bella persona*" while Francesca loves Paolo likewise for his charm or because of his delight in her "*bella persona*", that she pleases him. As Paolo and Francesca loved each other before God they "[mimicked] God's mode of existence⁵⁹.... and [created their] own myth" (Chiampi, 59) and laws.⁶⁰ Admitting no room for the Christian God, "Francesca's eyes were paradise enough for Paolo" (Chiampi, p. 62);⁶¹ in this way Paolo and Francesca make their love a mutual worship of *Amor*, a religion unto themselves, parodying Christianity and demonstrating the pride exemplified by Eve in turning away from God, which displays an extremely limited view of love.⁶²

Like the tyrant in the *Republic* embodying uncontrolled *eros*, *Amor* is a tyrant⁶³ violating both the law of God and social laws of man, causing death and destruction. Hence in the third tercet, Francesca describes the consequence of their adulterous relationship: *Amor condusse noi ad una morte* (V, 106). The fate⁶⁴ of this type of *Amor* is *morte*.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Chiampi (pp. 50, 59-60, 64, note 13) notes Francesca's twisted resemblance to God which he compares with Augustine's (*Confessions* II, 7) statement, "All who desert you and set themselves up against you copy you in a perverse way; but by this very act of imitation they only show that you are the Creator of all nature and, consequently, that there is no place whatever where man may hide away from you".

⁶⁰ Francesca creates her own laws in keeping with her will as opposed to following God's laws and his will and thereby "she usurped a prerogative God alone enjoys." (Chiampi, pp. 59-60, 72) Through her adultery and incest (*Inferno* VI, 2) she exalts self-love over duty thereby showing a complete disregard for God's law or any other bar her own. (Chiampi, p. 61) This tendency in Francesca to make her own desire into a law explains why the first shade in the train before which Francesca entered was Semiramis, the Greek name of a queen of ancient Assyria in the fourteenth or thirteenth century B.C. who legitimized lust and incest. (See Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 64, 69 who cites Paulus Orosius, *Hist.* I, iv, 4, 7-8). Later in the canto like Semiramis, Francesca attempts "to legalize, or 'authorize', her own lust in terms of the reading act: '*Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse.*'" (Jacoff, "Transgression and Transcendence", p. 56)

⁶¹ For Chiampi as God loves himself in his creation so Francesca loves herself in Paolo which blocks out God. This makes them a corrupted imitation of "deificatory charity" and thereby "fallen angels". (Chiampi, p. 69)

⁶² Her understanding of love expressed in *Inferno* V, 103-105 is that of a sensualist living for the present with little grasp of God as pure being, eternal and omniscient. "She cannot conceive of a love that could transcend her own and hence trivialize it." (Chiampi, p. 57)

⁶³ This domination by the tyrant *Amor* (Cambon, pp. 57-8) which involves the surrender of one's own desires leads to death. Francesca finds him irresistible, overcoming reason, demonstrating the full extent of the tyranny in love's destructive potential by firmly maintaining her devotion to this destroying god and self-destructive love. (See also Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 89)

⁶⁴ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 91.

⁶⁵ The end of this type of *Amor* is *morte*, emphasized by the common sound in "*Amor*" and "*morte*", one picking up where the other has ended, so that Cambon writes "The beginning of love is described as a fire quickly catching ('*ratto s'apprende*'), whereas at the end life itself is extinguished ('*a vita ci spense*'). Love's torch begets a consuming fire which leaves only ashes." (Cambon, p. 58) This is an inversion of "*Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*" *Paradiso* XXXIII (Cambon, p. 59).

Francesca's linking of love and death confirms her misunderstanding or misreading of Cavalcanti's vision of love. Though Shapero's reading seems to equate Francesca's view of love with Cavalcanti's,⁶⁶ while Cavalcanti correlates love and death it is in a very different way from Francesca. Unlike Francesca, who experiences love/passion as leading to physical death, a process having religious and moral undertones, Cavalcanti's notion of death by love is not physical nor is his notion of love "consciously religious or moral" (Shaw, p. 123).⁶⁷ Although Cavalcanti discusses the association of love and death, it only superficially resembles Francesca's third tercet; opposing the goal of Francesca, Cavalcanti through stressing the beloved's inability to live up to his ideal, ultimately undermining the beloved, thereby expresses disillusionment at love's finitude. Once again, as in her twisting of Guinizelli's *donna angelica* to carnal ends in the second tercet, in the third Francesca distorts Cavalcanti's vision of the relation of love and death.⁶⁸ One might say that she has poorly read her texts, but more probably she has read into them what she wanted to see in order to suit her desires, a point in which she further resembles Eve, influenced by the serpent's deception in Genesis 3:4-5.

Like Eve in Genesis 3:14 blaming the serpent, Francesca's attitude towards her own damnation is to blame everyone rather than taking personal responsibility. She blames God, *Amor*, Guinizelli, Cavalcanti, the Troubadours⁶⁹ and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, Paolo, Giovanni, and suggestive literature⁷⁰, a matter which we shall soon discuss with

⁶⁶ Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 102.

⁶⁷ "It is not recognized as an aspiration to the highest good, but it is a thoroughly human affection. Born of imaginative intellectuality, the nobility of the human soul...it becomes a passion of body and soul for a real woman, in which the Supreme Good ('*buon perfetto*') is forgotten." (Shaw, p. 123) "With all her gentleness, beauty, understanding, and complete charm, which seemed to correspond exactly to his imagined ideal, she is essentially without mercy, ready to be a thoughtful spectator of the death of his heart." (Shaw, pp. 119-121) "The passion is destructive and often disastrous [bringing death; "The conviction of hopelessness leads at last to the gradual death of love"; Shaw, pp. 122-123], and the mind of the poet broods with tender melancholy over the impossibility, demonstrated again and again by experience, of holding permanently the temporary realization of his ideal." (Shaw, p. 123)

⁶⁸ Through this misreading of Cavalcanti she describes a purely carnal negative view of love leading to death, which, as we shall see, contrasts with Dante's love for Beatrice, the example of "*fino Amor*" which leads to life. The opposition expressed in this last tercet encapsulates Dante's problem and the first marked effort to come to terms with the problem of the extraordinary ambiguity of love, which can lead to eternal life as in the love of Beatrice or lead to death and eternal damnation as in the case of Francesca.

⁶⁹ Nardi ("*Filosofia dell'Amore*", pp. 87-8) and Croce (p. 110) both note that Francesca blames the Troubadours.

⁷⁰ Sayers, "The Meaning of Heaven and Hell" in *Introductory Papers on Dante*, p. 80.

regard to Lancelot, and elicits our compassion.⁷¹ While blaming others, one cannot help noticing that she misreads everyone and everything that she blames, so that the texts are often twisted into their opposite,⁷² a point that will be developed in this chapter, which results in an idealization of the carnal. Through her twisting of texts into their opposites, she serves her own ends (see 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Connectedly with her courtly love parody of Christianity, she turned away from the Biblical laws against adultery and incest known to her through the medieval church and towards the poetry of the Troubadours and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. This poetry she further distorted to her own end to fulfill and support her desire for an incestuous adulterous relationship with her brother-in-law, similar to Semiramis. In the pursuit of self-justification, she sculpted a support in courtly love and the religion of *Amor* and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, which finds its completion in *Lancelot du Lac* (also known as *Lancelot do Lac*) through which she defines her own personal myth as we shall soon discover, thus clarifying the meaning behind Minos' warning.⁷³

Francesca's indulgence of desires and her reaction to her damnation cast light on her beliefs and why she is the only Christian woman in Hell. She has prioritized her own physical or self-regarding desires and Paolo over spiritual love, thereby turning away from God in order to satisfy these desires. By doing this she makes her desires into her god, parodying and opposing God and medieval Christianity and ultimately leading to her death and damnation. Francesca's reaction to this tragic end is to blame everyone as an act of self-justification.⁷⁴ "As the only Christian woman condemned to eternal torment...Dante had both theological and artistic reasons for placing Francesca in Hell." (O'Grady, p. 79) As a devoted practitioner of courtly love, she is not a Christian but a follower of *Amor*, a pagan divinity. Like Eve wishing to be her own god (Genesis 3:6), Francesca wishes to be "a light unto [herself]; regards [herself] as [her] own light" (Augustine, *City of God*, p. 573). This in turn is reinforced by Dante's analogy equating Francesca with Venus as discussed in "The Venus of Rimini." As the "goddess of love"

⁷¹ Masciandaro, p. 85.

⁷² Poggioli, p. 70.

⁷³ We now begin to discern the meaning of Minos' warning. Francesca's "attempt to shift responsibility onto a literary personification met with no favour from Minos, the judge and 'connoisseur of sin', who consigned her to this second circle of Hell" (Boyde, p. 298), having heard a confession of a very different sort when she had no choice but to tell the truth. This justifies thus Minos' warning to Dante not to trust all that he hears.

⁷⁴ Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 104.

directed by and existing for the satisfaction of her own desires, Dante's use of pagan imagery reinforces and underlines this Christian message.

3. MIRROR

Reflecting Adam's identification with Eve (Genesis 2:23), Francesca's influence upon the pilgrim Dante is such that he mirrors her. Consequently after her description in line 100-106, *Quand' io intesi quell'anime offense, china' il viso, e tanto il tenni basso, fin che 'l poeta mi disse: 'Che pense?'* ("And when I heard these afflicted souls I bent my head and held it down so long that at last the Poet said to me: 'What are thy thoughts?"). The moment when Dante bends his head in silence indicates a moment of deep reflection and an "act of sympathy" and thereby emotional imitation⁷⁵ by which Dante "symbolically participates in their sin, the essence of which is the submission of reason to desire" (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 79).⁷⁶ Dante is falling into their sin because he identifies himself with their love so intimately. This identification is shown by the way the notion of love in the *Vita Nuova* parallels Guinizelli's *cor gentile*, and through the apparent influence of Guinizelli in Francesca's first tercet, while the perversion of Guinizelli's *donna angelica* in her second tercet suggests not only their fall but his. Therefore that he lowers his head suggests that he fears being condemned to a like fate, as if this is the consequence of his own poetry and the conception of love revered in the poetry of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. Francesca's surrender of reason to passion makes him recall his own passionate (irrational) state at the time, particularly, of the writing of the poetry of the *Vita Nuova*⁷⁷, a state which up until this point he had greatly valued and idealized, but which subsequently he begins to reevaluate and perhaps even judge.

This self-examination is continued when in response to Virgil's question "*Che pense?*", Dante answers: "Alas, how many sweet thoughts, how great desire, brought them to the woeful pass!" (V, 112-114),⁷⁸ "sweet thoughts" being suggestive of the

⁷⁵ Masciandaro, p. 85.

⁷⁶ Musa notes that Bosco and Reggio believe this passage points to a rethinking on the part of the Poet with regard to stilnovistic poetry leading to a later opposition of Love-Virtue to Love-Passion.

⁷⁷ Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 79-80.

⁷⁸ For Boyde (p. 299) at this moment Dante's fall begins, as it represents the moment he "surrenders reason to desire". However this surrender seems a gradual process (De Sanctis, p. 48) fully achieved at the

medieval theory of courtly love held by Capellanus.⁷⁹ It however seems a moment in which Dante is deeply perplexed, Dante's response to Virgil reflecting an *aporia* with regard to love's ambiguous nature.⁸⁰ Given this *aporia* between what seemed initially wholesome/good desires and their tragic sinful end, Dante is caught, perplexed and bewildered. How can what seemed to him in the *Vita Nuova* sweet desires and emotions upon which he feasted and which nourished his soul lead to damnation? This is a moment of alarm in which he draws into question everything he believes and has believed about love and poetry, and thereby brings into question himself and his life up until this time.

To traverse this *aporia* or lack of passage, within or expressed by the desire of Francesca, into which Dante falls thereby identifying himself with Francesca, Dante must distinguish himself from Francesca in order to escape the same fate. Masciandaro beautifully and intricately examines this problem and the ultimate formulation of a *poros* (passage) through the victory of the rational element within Dante, or over Dante's emotions, whereby Francesca's view is brought into question.⁸¹ Reminiscent of the lovers of Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus*⁸² which we examined in the first part of this thesis, and like Lacan's mirror stage in which, through seeing the reflection of the self in another, one recognizes and comes to know oneself, likewise through his encounter with Francesca in whom he finds a kinship of sentiment derived from courtly love, Dante finds a reflection of himself, regardless of how distorted, and comes to know himself. This

moment of the kiss, the recognition of which due to the tears of Paolo causes his fainting and submersion in the likeness of death.

⁷⁹ "Sweet thoughts" refers to the "obsessive presence of the beloved's image in the imagination." (Durling, p. 98)

⁸⁰ Masciandaro, p. 86. "The wayfarer's exclamation reflects an *aporia*, an insoluble conflict between what is intrinsically good—the lover's sweet thoughts and great desire—and the 'doloroso passo,' the death that somehow that good has caused."

⁸¹ Masciandaro, p. 88.

⁸² In the *Phaedrus*, through the vision of the beloved as reminiscent of the form of Beauty, the lover fills with love. Through the lover's gaze in turn the beloved fills with love which reflects back on the lover making him beloved. This interaction causes love to grow further so that both are lover and beloved, formulating the dialectic of love as presented in the *Phaedrus*. Though the beloved Francesca comes to love Paolo through his gaze, his appreciation of her physical beauty, Francesca and Paolo's love is different from that of the *Phaedrus* as it rejects the presence of any transcendental source of beauty. Francesca ignores God as being the source of the beauty which gives Paolo pleasure and which in turn causes her to be filled with love and love back. With Francesca and Paolo the dialectic is limited to the physical and the self as it mistakenly finds its source in the physical self. For this reason, given that it can not move beyond the physical, their love becomes obsessive, fixated and compulsive, and therefore ultimately destructive. Love which has its source beyond the physical must ultimately move through the physical and move beyond the physical back to God, as we shall later learn with regard to Beatrice, or it becomes destructive bringing death as in the case of Francesca and Paolo.

distortion, which Masciandaro describes as a lack of perfect symmetry or as a disunity between subject and object, allows Dante to take a step back and question, making mimesis creative.⁸³ It is precisely through this self-reflective tendency, his rational ability to draw both his and Francesca's thoughts, feelings and their outcomes into question, that enables Dante to separate himself from both her and her fate.⁸⁴ This separation occurs at the moment Dante poses the question: "Francesca, thy torments make me weep for grief and pity, but tell me, in the time of your sweet sighing how and by what occasion did love grant you to know your uncertain desires?" (V, 116-120) At this point Dante steps out of his state of immersion in compassion and pity for her and her fate as well as out of his inner personal suffering and *pathos* (Masciandaro, p. 89). Shaking off their domination and turning to inspect them, he asks for a rational, factual explanation of how this love and suffering occurred (See Nardi, "*Filosofia dell'Amore*", pp. 237-8).⁸⁵

Although there is a sense in which the scene actually seems to lean more to Dante's increasing identification and submersion in the story of Francesca and notion of love, the reflective strand teased out/analyzed by Masciandaro is crucial and ultimately becomes dominant, thereby permitting Dante to change as opposed to being damned. Though this strand seems to remain under the surface for the moment, dominated by the obsessive love, the passion and compassion Dante feels for Francesca throughout the

⁸³ "In a sense, the 'seed' of this opposition or its creative ground is already constituted by the contiguity-opposition of the adjective 'sweet' and the noun 'thoughts'." (Masciandaro, p. 88) Although Masciandaro may to some extent be reading into and complexifying Dante's notion of the "sweet thoughts", the conclusion Masciandaro draws concerning what Dante feels and thinks within himself and what Dante feels and thinks with regard to Francesca and Paolo is persuasive.

⁸⁴ Masciandaro, p. 89.

⁸⁵ Singleton (*Commentary*, p. 92) sees Dante as being far more unified with Francesca at this point in the dialogue than Masciandaro (p. 88) suggests; more dominated by passion, and less able to make any rational judgment. Both Musa (*Commentary*, p. 80) and Masciandaro (pp. 87-89) question how this "courtly" love so exquisite and inevitable resulted in death and damnation. In their readings Singleton and Musa are focusing upon Dante's seduction by Francesca, his abandonment of reason out of compassion for and kinship with Francesca implying that Dante and Francesca have the same notions of love. Masciandaro, though showing this initial identity and subversion of reason for passion, focuses on making a substantial effort to track the distinction between Dante and Francesca within the unity created by Francesca's seduction of Dante to explain why Dante does not get "stuck" like Paolo in Hell with Francesca (cf. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, Ch. 1). This difference permits a certain "creative ambiguity" (Masciandaro, p. 90). In terms of Cavell's (and Emerson's) perfectionist theory, what we find is that Dante though enthralled with Francesca does not become permanently fixated upon her but retains his ability to reflect. This space distances him from his feelings, enabling him to reflect upon and learn from his partial or near death (see Freud, *Lay Analysis*, p. 23), and so move beyond them, thereby escaping death.

course of the Canto, it exists in constant tension with the latter, an indication of the tension between *pathos/pity* and *ethos/piety*.

Thus a closer reading of Canto V brings out the tension between unity and difference, the seduction into the sphere of Francesca by her obsessive narrow view of love versus the universal view of Francesca's position as a negative deviation from the greater view of which God is the centre.⁸⁶ These opposing views of love are encapsulated in the "[richly ambiguous]" (Singleton, *Commentary*) word *dubbioso* (V, 120),⁸⁷ expressing the ambiguity of love and hence the resulting opposing perspectives⁸⁸ and economies.⁸⁹ From this it appears that Dante the pilgrim's and Francesca's different fates are determined by the fact that originally they had different notions of love, testifying to the inherent ambiguity in the concept of love.

Here distinguishing his fall from the Fall in Genesis, we see Dante can become other. Although he has thus far supported courtly love and a form of desire which suppresses reason as in the early *Vita Nuova*, making him a kindred spirit to Francesca, and though he is still held under Francesca's spell, trapped and captive, through his continued questioning or distance, characterized by Masciandaro as the *caesura*, he can become another, hence we see the potential for change. This potentiality lies precisely in his ability to question Francesca about her love, which brings into question the nature of her conception of love which in turn (particularly due to its limitation) suggests too that it

⁸⁶ This further implies that Francesca's autonomous sphere of *eros* exists within the heteronomous universe of God as a part within the whole, though her attitude implies that she denies the supremacy of the latter as we have previously seen. Many critics forget that the sphere Francesca creates in Canto V is part of the whole. Cambon (p. 53) critiques De Sanctis, Croce, Maud Bodkin and Domenico Vittorini for thinking that "the episode [is] poetically self-contained" as opposed to being part of the whole. Similarly Brandeis (p. 23) criticises Busnelli, De Sanctis, Foscolo and Trombadori as having "context-blindness" seeing her as a portrait of a woman as opposed to a damned soul expressing something about Hell. It is only by seeing Francesca within the whole that she can be fully understood because she is a part of the whole. (See Chiampi p. 70) Acknowledgement of her context results in a judgement upon her while its denial incurs a judgment upon us.

⁸⁷ "*Dubbioso*, referring to the desire of the lovers, ... can mean 'hesitant', 'not yet manifested,' i.e., desire of which neither lover is wholly conscious (Barbi, 1932, p. 16). But *dubbioso* can also mean 'dangerous', 'that which is to be feared'; cf. The verb '*dubbiar*' in *Purgatorio* XX, 135." (Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 92-93) Masciandaro (p. 91) sees "*dubbiosi*" as encapsulating Dante's engagement to Francesca; according to the first meaning the lovers are unified "binding like to like", eliciting *pathos* and pity, Francesca being the centre, and following the second, "distance" from Francesca and objectivity, resulting in and from *ethos* and fear through an awareness of God as the centre of the universe. (Masciandaro, p. 91)

⁸⁸ Courtly love tradition and the poetry of *Dolce Stil Nuovo* versus Christianity (Masciandaro, p. 91).

⁸⁹ Francesca's 'restricted economy' of false love presenting itself as the "general economy" of true love opposes an economy in which those two loves coexist, in creative opposition", the pilgrim versus Francesca. (Masciandaro, p. 91)

could be other; the failure of a limited finite love suggests its opposite, the possibility of a limitless infinite love. Therefore through drawing into question Francesca's notion of love Dante demonstrated his ability to think beyond her notion of love which further demonstrates, as we shall see, that he can think beyond himself and thereby (as opposed to Adam and Eve at the moment of the Fall) love that which is beyond himself.

4. THE KISS

Francesca answered Dante's question by exclaiming: 'There is no greater pain than to recall the happy time in misery, and this thy teacher knows' (V, 121). This exclamation is measured to win Dante as a lover, a thinker and a poet. She gains the allegiance of his heart through suffering for him by remembering her prefallen state producing a mixture of guilt, sorrow and devotion in the pilgrim.⁹⁰ She stimulates his mind through the diversity of literary references (Virgil's *Aeneid*⁹¹, Augustine, Aquinas and Boethius⁹²) which though misused⁹³, captivate an emotional scholar, and lastly she captures the attention of the poet through the shift and simplification of her language.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Durling, p. 98.

⁹¹ The sheer diversity of other literary references invoked in/by this line suggests a further effort to gain the compassion of Dante the intellectual and the scholar. Lines 121-6 recall *Aeneid* ii.3 when Aeneas says to Dido, *infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem...* (O queen, thou dost bid me renew an unspeakable sorrow...) (See Boyde, p. 299 and Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 103) Also this echoes *Aeneid*, II, 10, 12-13. "Yet if thou hast such longing to learn our disasters...though my mind shudders to remember, and has recoiled in grief, I will begin." *Sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros...quamquam animus meminesse horret luctuque refugit, incipiam.* (Trans. Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 93)

⁹² In this line Francesca invokes perhaps Augustine *Confessions* X, 14, Aquinas, but most probably Boethius. Augustine *Confessions* X, 14. "*Aliquando et e contrario tristitiam meam transactam laetus reminiscor, et tristis laetitiam.*" (Sometimes on the contrary, in joy do I remember my forepassed sorrow, and in sadness my joy.) Aquinas writes in the *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 36, a.1, ad 4: "*Memoria praeteritorum bonorum, in quantum fuerunt habita, delectationem causat: sed in quantum sunt amissa, causant tristitiam.*" ('Recollection of past goods in so far as we have had them, causes pleasure; in so far as we have lost them, causes sorrow.' Trans. Singleton) Taking these references into account, Singleton (*Commentary*, p. 93) notes however that Boethius (*Consol. Philo.* II, iv, 11. 3-6) is "much closer." "*Sed hoc est quod recolentem vehementius coquit. Nam in omni adversitate fortunae infelicissimum est genus infortunii fuisse felicem.*" (But this is that which vexeth me most, when I remember it. For in all adversity of fortune it is the most unhappy kind of misfortune to have been happy)."

⁹³ As in the case of Guinizelli and Cavalcanti, Francesca's reading of Boethius' *Consolatione* seems "distorted...she stops reading too soon...Happiness is wholeness, according to Boethius, and cannot be defined by any one material pleasure" (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 81), a position which stands in opposition to Francesca's view that her whole happiness lies in Paolo's desire for her. Therefore once again Francesca twists literature to her own ends of persuasion and self-expression as opposed to the pursuit of truth.

⁹⁴ Twisting the use of "root" in Ephesians 3:17-19 which should refer to Christ and the Bible as opposed to a romance (see Musa, *Commentary*, p. 81), Francesca continues, "But if thou hast so great desire to know

Francesca begins her story: “We read one day for a pastime of Lancelot, how love constrained him.” (*Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto*⁹⁵ *di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse*) Given their idle time, that they read of Lancelot, a notorious romance⁹⁶ of adultery perhaps paralleling their courtship⁹⁷ hints at the coming disaster. To establish their innocence, when describing this romance, Francesca focuses upon “*come amor lo strinse*” employing “a violent verb, *stringere*, ‘to grasp’ or ‘to squeeze,’ to indicate the violence of the passion mastering the knight’s soul” (Poggioli, p. 61). Given that the force of *Amor* grasping Lancelot caused him to act, which in turn acted as the motivating principle for the rest of Francesca’s story’s action,⁹⁸ she blames *Amor*. However given the notorious ambiguity of the next line, “We were alone and had no misgivings” (*solì eravamo e senza alcun sospetto*) (V, 129), this innocence is called into doubt. *Senza alcun sospetto* translates as “innocent”,⁹⁹ “without suspicion and fear” that their love has been discovered,¹⁰⁰ but also may suggest an intentional short-sightedness and a limited view of love indicative of a self-willed attempt to “create [their] own innocence” (Masciandaro, p. 96),¹⁰¹ the original having been lost. Even now they wish to return to innocence, yet as this return demanded a recognition of guilt, an acknowledgement of personal responsibility and repentance at a time which is now past, they are left in a perpetual state of unfulfilled desire of it.

our love’s first root, I shall tell as one may that weeps in telling” (V, 124-125); Paolo weeps while she tells (Masciandaro, p. 104; seen positively, De Sanctis, p. 46; seen negatively Masciandaro, p. 103). In telling she drops her sophisticated use of language, to express herself in a simple, unpretentious and direct manner which disarms the reader, provoking compassion and pity. (Boyde, p. 300; Musa, *Commentary*, p. 81)

⁹⁵ Mazzota, p. 166.

⁹⁶ For literature of French chivalry fashionable in Italy, see Sinclair, pp. 81-2 who also refers to P. Rajna (1920); “other allusions in Dante’s writings include *De vulg. Eloqu.* I, x, 2: ‘*Arturi regis ambages pulcerrime*’ (‘the exquisite legends of King Arthur’), and the ‘prose di romanzi’ of *Purg.* XXVI, 118. See also *Par.* XVI, 14-15, which is, in fact, a reminiscence of *Lancelot du Lac*.” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 94)

⁹⁷ Cambon, p. 201.

⁹⁸ Cambon, pp. 58-9.

⁹⁹ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 94; Musa, *Advent*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁰ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82.

¹⁰¹ We see that, as in our prior discussion of Francesca’s love which is autonomous and self-enclosed, unaware of cause and effect, likewise here her unawareness of danger is the direct result of this shortsighted and limited view of love rooted in a “desire to create [their] own innocence”. Masciandaro (p. 96) likens this to the desire of Adam and Eve for a “second innocence” and sphere of their own making as opposed to God’s. Thus “being alone and suspecting nothing” implies a “denial of the presence of God (the Infinite Other)” as well as of evil. (Masciandaro, p. 97; The refusal to acknowledge God is “to remove from one’s scene the dimension of *ethos* and fear”, Masciandaro, p. 98.)

At this time contrasting with this supposed “innocence”, they knowingly continued. “*Per più fiata*¹⁰² *li occhi ci sospinse quella lettura*¹⁰³, *e scolorocci*¹⁰⁴ *il viso; ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse. Quando leggemmo il disiato riso esser baciato da cotanto amante, questi, che mai da me non fia diviso, la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante*” (V, 130-136).¹⁰⁵ Paolo upon reading how “Lancelot” kissed Guinevere in turn kissed Francesca. Francesca curiously describes “those longed-for lips now being kissed by such a famous lover...“literally, ‘when we read the longed-for lips/to be kissed...’ (Musa, *Advent*, p. 25) which is an obscure construction of which Musa cleverly comments that the “break in Francesca’s sentence [perhaps was] indicative of a break...in her conscience, as with a scratch on a record.”¹⁰⁶

i. The Fall of the Ideal: *Disiato Riso* to *Bocca*

This kiss resulted in a fall from “innocence”, a fall from the ideal to real articulated in the movement from *disiato riso* to *bocca*.¹⁰⁷ Through comparing herself to Lancelot and Guenevere, she idealized herself and Paolo.¹⁰⁸ This physical kiss acts as the first step in the destruction of her ideal notion of romantic courtly love, which had thus

¹⁰² “*Fiata*” (breath) suggesting “breathlessness” brings to mind the violence which with their hearts must have been beating. (Durling, p. 98)

¹⁰³ Francesca, Paolo and Dante would have read French medieval romances in French. (Poggioli, p. 70; Boyde, p. 300).

¹⁰⁴ *Scolorocci* is “a sign of love, ‘paling’ often doubled as pity in romance literature.” Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82) See *Vita Nuova*.

¹⁰⁵ “Many times that reading drew our eyes together and changed the colour in our faces, but at one point alone it was that mastered us; when we read that the longed-for smile was kissed by so great a lover, he who never shall be parted from me, all trembling, kissed my mouth.”

¹⁰⁶ Taking into account Francesca’s cold, precisely constructed prelude to the kiss versus “Paolo’s kiss, itself vibrating with passion, we are offered a most incongruous juxtaposition” (Musa, *Advent*, p. 25), also suggesting that something more has happened, particularly as Francesca is in the habit of blaming others.

¹⁰⁷ The movement from *disiato riso* to *bocca* represents the movement from ideal/ fiction to real (Boyde, p. 300) as we mentioned previously in the “Venus of Rimini”. (Also see Poggioli, p. 62.) Grandgent (p. 55) translates *disiato riso* as “the worshipped lips.” However, “the desired object, the ‘object of dreams and sighs,’... is not her lips, or even her smiling lips... but the smile itself which is the expression, the poetry, the sentiment of the lips—something incorporeal which one sees hovering on the lips as if detached from them, which you can see but cannot touch.” (De Sanctis p. 49) Poggioli supports this when he writes, the “curved lips of the loved and loving queen lose all physical reality, becoming as light and incorporeal as their inviting and wordless smile, tend to give a spiritualized and idealized vision of that imaginary embrace.” (Poggioli, p. 62) For this reason according to Masciandaro (p. 99), Roger Dragonetti has interpreted *disiato riso* as “the sign of beatitude—and therefore of paradise” so that “what binds Paolo and Francesca is an image of paradise” (Dragonetti, p. 112).

¹⁰⁸ Poggioli, p.63; for differences see Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 99.

far been empowered by an appearance of spirituality, thereby moving the ideal into the actual.¹⁰⁹ Courtly love depended upon the fact that the desire experienced would remain unfulfilled, dwelling in the imagination and thereby remaining creative involving interpretation and complexity. Through the actualization of the kiss they destroyed the “creative space”¹¹⁰ and it has been “‘filled’ by one single image”¹¹¹ so that their love lost its romantic, ideal quality, and courtly love degenerated into *fol Amor*, lust and adultery, shattering and showing the falsity of the notion of love,¹¹² in which henceforth they are imprisoned in Hell.¹¹³

Francesca and Paolo do not get beyond the kiss of Lancelot and Guinevere. Francesca focuses on one element or moment, that of the kiss as opposed to seeing it in context and thereby seeking to understand the underlying significance of the entire passage.¹¹⁴ “Conquered by a single point in their reading [the sinful kiss], they were unable to discover the evolution of the story and its ‘happy ending’—the conversion of Lancelot and Guinevere to religious life, as Dante relates in the *Convivio*” (Masciandaro, p. 103). Had they completed the Vulgate Cycle (“a vast early-thirteenth-century prose compilation”¹¹⁵ which included the Book of *Lancelot du Lac*), they might have envisioned the consequences of their sin. “Lancelot’s and Guinevere’s adultery (with Arthur’s incest) eventually [destroyed] the entire Arthurian world... though the lovers

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Masciandaro, p. 102.

¹¹¹ Masciandaro, p. 103.

¹¹² As courtly love depends upon unfulfilled desire for its perpetuation the corresponding love poetry reveals an obsession with poetry and the self, “poetry obsessed with itself” (Tambling, *Dante and Difference*, p. 15), having a solipsistic nature. “Only an unfulfilled love can exist within the borders of this poetry—since poetry itself is the real desired object”. (Menocal, pp. 22-23) Given the nature of this “self-enclosed poetry”, the contents of this kind of poetry must not be applied to reality and made concrete as this would fulfill the narcissistic desire and therefore kill it, by taking its ideas out of the domain of the aesthetic and placing them under the scrutiny of the ethical. It is for this reason that Francesca’s imitation of Guinevere’s kiss failed. When Guinevere kissed, it was aesthetic having an idealized spiritualized fictional aspect. The moment Francesca took Guinevere’s kiss and gave it to Paolo, it entered the ethical and was judged and condemned as she had chosen to put into practice the wrong text (*Lancelot* instead of the Bible; Chiampi, p. 65).

¹¹³ “Thus, the undefinable has been ‘artificially’ defined. This is Hell.” (Masciandaro, p. 103)

¹¹⁴ This is of substantial consequence given that her taking of the ideas and poetry of Guinizelli, Cavalcanti and Boethius and the section of *Lancelot du Lac* out of context is precisely what many commentators such as De Sanctis and Grandgent do with her in not seeing Canto V in context. They have fallen into her trap shown in that they have come to some extent to read as she reads.

¹¹⁵ Durling, p. 99.

themselves repent and die saintly deaths” (Durling, p. 99).¹¹⁶ This realization might have caused them to repent like Lancelot.¹¹⁷ Tragically, Paolo and Francesca did not read to the end of *Lancelot*, having become “stuck” on the kiss¹¹⁸ and seeing the kiss as an absolute,¹¹⁹ choose to mistake *amor* for *caritas*. Thus the kiss made real, not only shattered romantic aesthetic illusions but simultaneously incurred ethical judgements¹²⁰, so that they are condemned forever to the kiss, the expression of a false, empty love, which has become their Hell.¹²¹

ii. Who Kissed Whom?

In *Lancelot du Lac*, Guinevere, beseeched by Gallehaut to reward Lancelot for his loyal service and love, turns and kisses him on the lips (Poggioli, p. 62), or more precisely, “*Et la roine voit que li chevaliers n’an ose plus faire, si lo prant ele par lo menton, si lo baise devant Galehot assez longuement, si que la dame de Malohaut sot que ele lo baise.*” (*Lancelot do Lac*, ed. Kennedy, Non-Cyclic, 348, lines 28-30)¹²² Given that Francesca claims “when we read that the longed-for smile was kissed by so great a lover, he who never shall be parted from me, all trembling, kissed my mouth,” she indicates that like Lancelot who kissed Guinevere, Paolo kissed her. However as we have just noted, in *Lancelot du Lac* it was Guinevere who kissed Lancelot implying that she kissed Paolo, thereby bringing Francesca’s account into doubt.

¹¹⁶ According to the editor of the Non-Cyclic *Lancelot do Lac*, Elspeth Kennedy (p. vi) “Dante in the *Inferno* refers to Galeotto, which would appear to correspond to the non-cyclic Prose ‘*Lancelot*’ as opposed to the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle or the *Vulgate* cycle.” As this “earlier non-cyclic form...does not include a *Queste del Saint Graal* or a *Mort Artu*” (p. v) it does not include the repentance of Lancelot and Guinevere and therefore might explain why on some level Paolo and Francesca “read no further”. However as Dante was conscious of their repentance in the *Convivio*, this argument cannot be valid. The only other possibility is that Dante was implying that Paolo and Francesca had read and were misled by the incomplete wrong version, the Non-Cyclic as opposed to the Vulgate, which would be a deeply implausible suggestion since the possibility does not contribute to this scene. The most promising conclusion to draw is that the version does not matter. What is important is that Paolo and Francesca focused upon one moment, as opposed to the whole story and ending of Guinevere and Lancelot, and allowed their destinies to be defined by it.

¹¹⁷ “Truly the knight Lancelot...did not wish to enter port with sails full set. [This] noble man indeed shortened the sail of [his] worldly [occupation], for in [his] extreme age [he] surrendered [himself] to religion, laying aside all worldly delights and pursuits.” (*Convivio* IV. XXVIII, 60-65)

¹¹⁸ Masciandaro, p. 102; also see Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 94.

¹¹⁹ Masciandaro, p. 103.

¹²⁰ De Sanctis, p. 50.

¹²¹ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82.

¹²² Also see Toynbee, *Specimens of Old French*, p. 161-2.

Commentators are divided on this issue. Masciandaro (p. 102) suggests that given Francesca's confusion as to who kissed first, the moment of this kiss must therefore have "immediately preceded or.... immediately followed the thematic point of the kiss" in *Lancelot*. If Francesca and Paolo had stopped reading before the kiss or if their emotions completely distracted them from what they were reading, this would be a reasonable not to mention realistic possibility.¹²³ Poggioli thinks Francesca was far more interested in the kiss she did receive and reshapes the story to conform with it.¹²⁴ Poggioli believes that though Paolo did kiss Francesca, as Lancelot kissed back, so Francesca did likewise and therefore is not exonerated from responsibility, a position Masciandaro calls a "reciprocal seduction".¹²⁵ However, most promisingly following on this theme of Francesca as seductress, Vinken argues that, in the "light of her *imitatio* of Guinevere, it must have been Francesca who kissed Paolo" and therefore is blamable,¹²⁶ and while Masciandaro objects that Francesca would not lie in front of Paolo and Dante,¹²⁷ Musa is convinced that this contradiction could not have been due to careless reading.¹²⁸ As in *Lancelot* Guinevere initiates, likewise Francesca kisses Paolo¹²⁹ though Musa is not sure whether her manipulation of the story is due to self-deception¹³⁰, "wishful thinking, outright lying, or, as is most probable, a very confused state of mind." (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82) In support of Musa and to respond further to Masciandaro's objection that Francesca would not deceitfully accuse Paolo in his presence, and therefore must have kissed her, we must take into account Lancelot's role as knight, hence the ethical conflicts inherent in courtly love resulting in the protecting and honouring of his Lady.¹³¹ Furthermore, Francesca was introduced as coming from the train of Dido, who

¹²³ Musa, *Advent*, p. 27-8.

¹²⁴ Poggioli, p. 71.

¹²⁵ Masciandaro, p. 109.

¹²⁶ Vinken, 'Encore: Francesca da Rimini,' p. 405, cited by Masciandaro, p. 109.

¹²⁷ Masciandaro, p. 109.

¹²⁸ Musa, *Advent*, p. 27-8.

¹²⁹ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82; Musa, *Advent*, p. 28.

¹³⁰ Musa, *Advent*, pp. 28-9; Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82.

¹³¹ Though I have not found this noted by the commentators, this conflict would explain whether, and if so why, Paolo would take the blame and therefore deceive Dante and the reader. As we recall, within courtly love there was an internal conflict between love of the Lord and Lady, the knight's allegiance to God and his lady (Lewis, *Allegory*, pp.17-18). This conflict is exemplified by Lancelot, "*la flor des cheualiers del monde*" (the flower of the knighthood of the world) in that due to his guilty love of Guinevere, Lancelot "failed in his quest for the Holy Grail." (For manuscript version of the *Lancelot du Lac*, see P. Toynbee, *Dante Studies and Researches*, pp. 10-37) (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 94) This conflict in *Lancelot du Lac*,

seduced Aeneas,¹³² which suggests that Francesca has done likewise,¹³³ showing Francesca to be the seductress.

However, Dante seems to retain an intentionally ambiguous position to keep the reader questioning. This forces the reader to weigh the situation back and forth, attempting to untie the knot of blame: who is more responsible and who is worse? Though this is the same technique with *aporiai* as we saw Plato use in the *Phaedrus*, it is to different ends. While Plato used the *aporia* as a means to stimulate thought which would lead to and participate in the pursuit of truth, Dante uses *aporiai* as a trap to close down thought while imprisoning the person experiencing the *aporia* in Hell. Confused by Francesca's literary *aporia*, Dante and the reader, curious and in their puzzled state, spend time in the depths of Hell having forgotten where they are and why they are there, through having become entirely entwined and enamoured with Francesca and concerned in and by her responsibility in this tragedy. This complex reversal acts as an *aporia* upon the reader, a lack of passage, also making Dante the pilgrim bewildered, unsure what to think and whom to trust. Because of this *aporia*, made potent due to our interest in Francesca, we participate in Dante's confusion and thereby join with him, through compassion and fascination in her guilt, in order that we not be mere passive spectators in the descent into Hell, but full participants with stakes of our own, so that the redemption, provided that we do not get stuck, be ours as well.

given that Paolo imitates Lancelot, implies that "within the courtly convention the identification of Paolo and Lancelot touches on a further conflict: the difficulty of choosing perfection in the role of the knight or lover" (O'Grady, p. 78; also see Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 97). "Within the chivalric code Lancelot, in obeying his lady in all things, was departing from knightly duty. It was considered impossible that perfection could be achieved as both knight and lover. Paolo too abandons duty and fraternal loyalty in order to give himself completely to love" (O'Grady, p. 82). This favouring of the role of lover over that of knight would imply that in the name of love for his lady he would deceive, violating his commitment to and love for God, the major problem in courtly love. (This conflict we did not see within the pagan myth. Mars is both warrior and lover. However with the influence of Christianity in the Middle Ages, instilling a system of ethics within Chivalry, a conflict arose with the pagan culture transmitted through the insistence in courtly love on the cult of *Amor*.)

Given this ability to deceive we must now understand why he would deceive. One of the tenets of courtly love is enduring the unjust treatment of the *midons* and "obeying his lady in all things" (O'Grady, p. 82). Lancelot obeys Guinevere's orders to lose the joust as a punishment for not mounting the cart quickly enough which showed a lack of zeal to serve her. As Lancelot lived according to this twisted standard of chivalry set out by courtly love and as Paolo imitated Lancelot, he too would have behaved in like fashion. Therefore to protect the name and honour of his *midons* Francesca, he took the blame.

¹³² *Aeneid*, Book IV, lines 36-39, 60-72, 85-91.

¹³³ Musa, *Advent*, p. 140.

iii. *Galeotto*

Francesca turns once more to blame not herself but the text and its maker: “A *Galeotto* was the book and he that wrote it” (*Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse*) (V, 137). The first half of *Lancelot du Lac*, called the Galehault after the prince who mediated between Lancelot and Guinevere¹³⁴, indicates that the prince, this part of the book and its creator served in different ways as “their [guides] to love” (Grandgent, p. 55), “[fulfilling] the role of making [Francesca and Paolo] aware of their mutual love” (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 97) and acting as a go-between. Because of this awareness, “that day we read in it no farther” (*quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante*) (V, 138). Poggioli (p. 65) believes “that day” indicates one of many occasions in which Paolo and Francesca read the book together, though not sufficiently to be confronted with the tragedy and repentance of Guinevere and Lancelot. However Francesca’s words simultaneously allude to the physical consummation of her love for Paolo (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 83)¹³⁵ in which they seem to have been imprisoned at the moment of death. Given this context, the use of *Galeotto* shows how Francesca while she still idealizes and is seduced by this courtly romantic view of love, simultaneously calls both book and its author panderers holding them as responsible for her fall.¹³⁶ However while Francesca simultaneously accuses and absolves,¹³⁷ her use of *Galeotto* may further indicate an effort to put herself in the best light¹³⁸ through subtle, eloquent, sophisticated rhetoric to distract the pilgrim from her sin.

However given Francesca’s misreadings of Guinizelli, Cavalcanti, Boethius and *Lancelot du Lac*, in which she has taken small sections of the works out of context and then has distorted their authors’ original ideas to suit her own personal end, following these guidelines, any text can become a *Galeotto*. Francesca’s use of *Galeotto* opens a

¹³⁴ At the intervention of Lancelot, Galehault ‘Roy d’outre les marches’ was brought to terms of peace with Arthur, and was thereafter a great friend of Lancelot. After Lancelot confided in him concerning his love for Guinevere, Galehault acted as intermediary between the two arranging a meeting, encouraging them to kiss. (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 95; see also Grandgent, p. 55; Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 103)

¹³⁵ “The power of the Old French romance and that of Paolo’s kiss happened to find her vulnerable (as they might not have found another).”

¹³⁶ “Where but in a university, though, could you get to Hell for a misreading?” (Shapero, *Knot of Body and Soul*, p. 97) A good question!

¹³⁷ Poggioli, p. 64.

¹³⁸ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 82.

debate concerning the responsibility of reading and writing literature. Through blaming literature Francesca labels it as (at least in part) an evil, and herself its victim,¹³⁹ in contrast to Nardi who points out love was already in their hearts, the moment of reading providing only the occasion for its expression,¹⁴⁰ which seems to support the Biblical reading of sin in Mark 7: 21-23.

Given this conflict of *pathos* and *ethos*, we can deduce that “true poetry, or good literature in general, is a deliverer, not a seducer”.¹⁴¹ As in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (260E5-7, 261A3-5), where ideally rhetoric and poetry must convey the truth, likewise Dante here indicates through his own poem that poetry should lead towards the truth, be a deliverer, a *poros* through the *aporia* as opposed to a seducer, rhetoric purely for the art of persuasion with no concern for the truth (*Phaedrus* 259E5-260A5, 272D, E), “[pandering] to passion instead of sobering it”.¹⁴² Dante in short uses Francesca to express his critique of irresponsible literature and to exemplify its consequences and thereby to judge it.¹⁴³

In so doing, however the question remains as to whether Dante like Plato in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* does not fall under his own condemnation of literature, an issue of which Dante is keenly aware and which he dramatizes through the fainting pilgrim.¹⁴⁴ “Dante’s own text...does not simply claim the privileged position of demystifying ‘romantic’ lies; it acknowledges itself as part of the unavoidable

¹³⁹ Boyde (p. 300) notes that for Francesca, and through her Dante, the act of reading of love prose and verse has become an evil. Dante indicates this through showing the values of the literature of courtly love applied or put into practice in the lives of Francesca and Paolo, “non-knights...[to illustrate] more powerfully than legend the dangers to their own society of that kind of love” (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 99; Mazzota, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 166.). Because of this influence or according to Mazzota “possessed by literature”, Chiampi (p. 68) calls them “victims of literature”.

¹⁴⁰ Nardi, “*Filosofia dell’Amore*”, p. 91.

¹⁴¹ Cambon, p. 52.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Poggioli, pp. 76-77; also Cambon, p. 46, note.

¹⁴⁴ Concerning the line, ‘*Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scisse*,’ “Francesco D’Ovidio writes [Nuovi Studii Danteschi, II (Milan, 1907), p. 531], the poet confesses his horrified feeling at the thought that he too ‘could become a Gallehaut to somebody else.’” (Poggioli, p. 76-77) As Francesca’s tercets echo not only Guinizelli but the *Vita Nuova*’s “Love and the gentle heart are one thing” as we previously discussed, the pilgrim may have swooned because he “belongs as poet and lover specifically to the category of amorous transgressors...[Therefore] the enormity of his future task looms before him together with the misdemeanors of the past.” (Shapero, *Knot of Body and Soul*, p. 97; also Boyde, p. 281.) Though Poggioli (pp. 76-77) thinks “there is no reason for such fear, since that line helps to destroy the very suggestion on which it is built”, Mazzota (*Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 169) is more realistic: Dante “faints in the intense awareness, furthermore, that he, as an author, might trap the readers into the illusory self-enclosure of the romance, just as the stilnovistic poetry, which Francesca quotes in her speech, trapped her”.

ambiguities of the language of desire” (Poggioli, pp. 76-77). One cannot help but sympathize with Dante’s dilemma and consider that his critique of literature has some weight not only in its judgment on himself but moreover on the writer of this thesis. However the writer of texts, particularly one addressing the ambiguous subject of desire, is always vulnerable to misunderstanding and misappropriation, though it remains a question to what extent he or she is responsible for the errors of his or her readers, particularly of readers like Francesca.

iv. Paolo Weeping

Faced with this self-willed unity in which two have “become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), condemned to remain inseparable eternally, “while the one spirit said this the other wept so that for pity I swooned as if in death and dropped like a dead body”. (*Mentre che l’uno spirto questo disse, l’altro piangea, sì che di pietade io venni men così com’ io morisse; e caddi come corpo morto cade*; V, 139-142) Echoing the pilgrim’s tears over the pain of Francesca, (“Francesca, your torments make me weep for grief and pity”; *Inf.* V, 116-117, Masciandaro p. 105), Dante is so moved and deeply upset that he swoons (“as if in death”; *Inf.* V, 141).¹⁴⁵ This swoon clearly is “a mimetic response” (Masciandaro, p. 104) a “symbolic death [imitating] Francesca’s (death-bringing) surrender to passion” (Durling, p. 99). For a few moments the pilgrim “becomes thus the equal of Paolo; and even of Lancelot, who for a while seems to swoon himself, while talking with the Queen of his still unrewarded love. In this brief moment, Dante himself is but a creature of *pathos*, a victim of pity and self-pity, like Paolo and Lancelot.” (Poggioli, p. 74)¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ In contrast to Poggioli (p. 74) who believes that Dante fainted at Francesca’s last words, O’Grady (p. 82) thinks that Dante is reacting to Paolo’s tears when he faints. Following the line in which they speak “as one may that weeps in telling” they are viewed as one being to represent a corrupted state of self-willed matrimony, “two becoming one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Given that after the Fall from Eden man was to rule over woman (Your husband “will rule over you”; Genesis 3:16), to be dominated by Francesca seems part of Paolo’s punishment; he has no escape from her which in itself seems cause for tears. This reversal of roles is culturally instantiated by the domination of the *midons* over the knight in courtly love which Paolo and Francesca are here not only imitating but now embodying for eternity.

¹⁴⁶ See also Brandeis, p. 34; Durling, p. 99.

However, he is not fully like Paolo, an embodiment of *pathos*; the mimesis is not total as this would “[negate] transformation and transcendence” (Masciandaro, p. 105). This ingredient of *ethos*, an awareness of ethics, implies judgment and justice which produces fear. Thus his fainting is a mixture of the identical *pathos* he feels for Paolo which is undercut by the terror he feels caused by the recognition of the judgment made upon himself and the punishment he deserves, echoing Augustine’s critique of the *Aeneid*.¹⁴⁷ Through recognizing he has fallen unwittingly and the consequences of his errors, Dante loses consciousness.

This is a moment that distinguishes Paolo and Dante. Paolo feels sorrow and self-pity and is inconsolable, frozen in death. In contrast Dante expresses regret for this *pathos*, his identification with and imitation of Francesca and Paolo, such as Augustine felt for Dido, which leads to repentance. Thus Dante the poet, through his implicit critique of the literature of courtly love calling both writer and text panderer, echoes Augustine’s Christian/Neo-Platonic critique of the *Aeneid* in the *Confessions* concerning Dido, who was later considered to embody features of courtly love (Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 41). Though making judgments on and censuring these elements of *pathos*, pity and self-pity (which Plato likewise censured in the *Republic*), both Dante and Augustine are ultimately led out of the Hell of their passions to ascend to God which is life (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). Taking this into consideration, “the pilgrim’s pity, which will frequently figure in the rest of Hell, is presented as highly questionable.” (Durling, p. 99)¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Reacting to the echo of Paolo’s tears, Dante feels self-pity and regret echoing Augustine’s repentance of his devotion to the Dido of the *Aeneid*, turning to God. “What can be more pitiful than an unhappy wretch unaware of his own sorry state, bewailing the fate of Dido, who died for love of Aeneas, yet shedding no tears for himself as he dies for want of loving you?... But I did not love you. I broke my thoth with you and embraced another...I did not weep over this, but instead I wept for Dido, who surrendered her life to the sword.” (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Book I, 13). Like Dante weeping for Paolo and Francesca, Augustine wept for Dido and thereby became an example of *pathos*. “Augustine’s tears for Dido find a correlate in Dante’s grief: ‘*Francesca, I tuoi martiri/ a langrimar mi fanno tristo e pio...*’ (II. 116-7)” (Mazzota, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 168-70). Yet Augustine recognizes that he should have been weeping for himself because having succumbed to *pathos* and pity, he fell under ethical judgment. He was separated from God as he loved the creation more than the Creator. Rather than loving God which leads to life, Augustine loved physical encounters exemplified by Dido which leads to death. Parallel with this point in the *Confessions* when Augustine judges and condemns himself for his worldliness, likewise the pilgrim faints in horror that he too has fallen into the trap.

¹⁴⁸ However Brandeis (p. 181) argues, “Dante has less pity for the damned the deeper he goes into Hell.”

5. FALLING FOR EVE

The role of Francesca in the *Commedia* is to seduce the Pilgrim. As seductress Dante portrays Francesca as a siren,¹⁴⁹ a beautiful woman who by “poetic utterances, like their songs...casts the spells”.¹⁵⁰ She accomplishes her seduction leading to her downfall,¹⁵¹ drawing first Paolo then Dante into her sin of passion, the subjugation of reason by desire, through the extraordinary beauty of her words/speech, which marks the rift between the aesthetic and ethics.

Though the physical appearance of Francesca is never described, her personality and charm are obvious through her speech which is intricately constructed, passionate and real. From the speech she has such great appeal that De Sanctis considers Francesca to be Dante’s “ideal woman”.¹⁵² The pilgrim is so fascinated and touched by her as a unique “individual lady”¹⁵³ that he is virtually blind to her sin though from a certain point of view she is “the incarnation of lust unrepentant”.¹⁵⁴ Like a Siren it is precisely Francesca’s verbal expression, “the elegant words of the literary-minded Francesca” that made the pilgrim susceptible to her seduction and, as the pilgrim is the “younger self of the poet”, Dante the poet also (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 83).

This opposition of the aesthetic beauty of Francesca *versus* her ethical depravity, while paradoxical, reflected by the “apparent divergence in her episode between its undoubtedly Christian ethics and the astonishing beauty of its representation of courtly forms”,¹⁵⁵ functions as the means by which the seduction is successful. She attracts Paolo and Dante through surface beauty like a siren upon which they become fixated and are

¹⁴⁹ See also Chiampi, p. 78; also Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 91; for Dante’s view of women also see p. 85.

¹⁵⁰ Barker, 2002. In this way the Siren of Purgatory is present in the figure of Francesca in *Inferno* V, like those in the *Odyssey* XII, 158-9, “whose singing lured unwary sailors” to their deaths.

¹⁵¹ Musa, *Advent*, p. 34.

¹⁵² De Sanctis, pp. 36-9.

¹⁵³ Musa, *Advent*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁴ Musa, *Advent*, p. 34; also see Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 83-84. Dante chooses Francesca to be unrepentant, (Boyde, p. 297; Brandeis, p. 32) and unaware of her sin (Brandeis, p. 24) in contrast with Buonconte da Montefeltro (*Purgatorio* V, 101) who at the last minute repents and is saved, in order to critique courtly love (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 102).

¹⁵⁵ Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 96; also Chiampi, p. 51.

then led astray, pulled through their sensibility to aesthetic pleasure from the path of the ethical.

In her role as seductress,¹⁵⁶ Francesca acts as an Eve-figure.¹⁵⁷ Like Eve “introducing” sin to the world, “Dante has given [the Paolo and Francesca episode] the function of introducing the protagonist to the realm of sin”.¹⁵⁸ Reminiscent of Eve (Genesis 3:8), Francesca tries to recreate this garden, a “second innocence”,¹⁵⁹ a second marriage this time with Paolo while refusing to acknowledge the sin in this gesture (adultery and incest), hence the presence of evil in the garden.¹⁶⁰ Pretending this love, *amor*, is good and feeding this fruit to Paolo, she causes both to be ripped from life. Then through Francesca as *figura Eva*, Dante is tempted and falls like Adam through the subjugation of his reason to desire. His fall however is not out of passion for Francesca as in the case of Paolo but due to the compassion he feels for them.¹⁶¹ Yet this compassion results from the fact that he is touched and affected by their passion, as he feels with them and is progressively more attracted to and lured into it, his “ethos and fear” diminishing¹⁶² so he is tempted as a sinner¹⁶³ and falls into sin.¹⁶⁴ Thus as Adam fell for Eve, and Paolo for Francesca, so Dante falls for Francesca, a temptation and fall which ultimately extends and involves us.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁶ This brings into question Dante’s vision of women. Shapero (*Woman, Earthly and Divine*, pp. 79-80) sees his vision of the seductress as not limited to Francesca but concerning all women. Bergin (“The Women of the Comedy”, p. 71) thinks that, given “the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were still a man’s world”, the only classification for women involves love. However, in contrast to Bergin Carroll thinks “Francesca has the mournful distinction of being the only Christian woman in the *Inferno*” his “worship of Mary, Beatrice and Lucia” indicating his “reverence for” and belief in the greater good in Womanhood. (Carroll, p. 92)

¹⁵⁷ Musa, *Advent*, pp. 34-5, 137; also see Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 83-4.

¹⁵⁸ Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 96.

¹⁵⁹ By negating the tragic, Paolo and Francesca fail to experience the transfiguring, redeeming power of tragic vision” (Masciandaro, p. 62). However, in this negation of the tragic lies the tragedy, making them tragic figures.

¹⁶⁰ This falling is caused by sin which is *peche* (*hamartia*: missing the mark in archery; missing the good), indicative of evil which finds its source for the medieval Christian in the Garden of Eden. See Roger Dragonetti, “*L’Episode de Francesca dans le cadre de la convention courtoise*,” p. 94.

¹⁶¹ “Although caused by sentimental participation rather than by moral complicity, his fall parallels their fall.” (Poggioli, p. 66)

¹⁶² Masciandaro, p. 69.

¹⁶³ Musa, *Advent*, p. 35. Here reenacting “the Fall [is] a prerequisite for his journey to God (and redemption)” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 83-4).

¹⁶⁴ Dante imitates and intensifies the action through “alliteration, assonance, and , especially here, rhythm” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 83-4).

¹⁶⁵ This temptation extends beyond Dante to involve us. While the sinners theologically for Dante should “arouse no pity” but judgement, as human beings we feel for them (Grandgent, p. 47). While pity and

Francesca's role as Eve is further emphasized in that she refuses to take personal responsibility for her sin. Francesca rehearses both Adam's and Eve's refusal to take responsibility in Genesis. Adam blames God and Eve, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it" (Genesis 2:12), and Eve turns to blame the serpent: "The serpent deceived me and I ate" (Genesis 2:14). Likewise, Francesca blames *Amor*, Paolo, God, Gianciotto, poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, the writer and text of *Lancelot du Lac*, and others, for her damnation; everyone but herself. Therefore Francesca ties together the responses of both Adam and Eve, as she and Paolo are tied together, being fully blameworthy.

In building her own paradise, an imperfect or fallen imitation of the first myth,¹⁶⁶ a pattern which we saw in "The Venus of Rimini" with regard to the myth of Mars and Venus, Francesca has willed her own ideal love at the centre of her world, her own dream and paradise. However in reformulating the true paradise according to her individual desires, creating not only her own personal myth but a sphere or bubble separated from but within the whole of God's universe, she has distorted and falsified the true paradise and separated herself from God. As she refused before her death to recognize her fall, her sin, and her need of redemption, her fiction in that it rivals, parodies and eclipses God's creation proves entirely destructive,¹⁶⁷ resulting in her damnation.

However given that Francesca created her own paradise, denying evil which acts as the myth or central mystery of the cult of Francesca, there emerges a sense that things could have been otherwise.¹⁶⁸ As the infernal imitation points to its opposite, so an

wishing her free of Hell is normal, "if the reader thinks that she *ought not* to be in Hell, that is another matter: Dante is telling us not what he thinks ought to be, but what he thinks *is*." (Brandeis, p. 32; also see p. 26; Cambon, p. 46; Croce, p. 111; critiques of De Sanctis by Poggioli, p. 75 and Nardi, "*Filosofia dell'Amore*", pp. 88-89) Nonetheless, identifying ourselves with their "love-longing", their passion which we likewise feel, we are moved to pity and even compassion. So as before a Siren "if we do not block our ears and eyes, we shudder simultaneously, for we hear the inevitable storm headed our way" (Brandeis, p. 27), which ultimately causes us through our identification with them to fall into temptation and like Dante to fall.

¹⁶⁶ Masciandaro, pp. 78-9.

¹⁶⁷ Masciandaro, p. 100.

¹⁶⁸ "The very fact that it is an infernal scene, whose character bears some proportion with the nature of both the sin and the punishment of the two lovers, calls into being its opposite, a paradisaic scene, or its equivalent. It is too simplistic to say that the pilgrim idealizes the two lovers and their love, seeing them increasingly as attractive, sympathetic figures. It is more accurate to speak of a mimetic response to them and to their setting or scene, whereby he gradually moves into their world, analogously experiencing what they have experienced and now continue to experience: a love whose power and whose form proved and now proves to be a false, destructive imitation of the recovery of the paradisaic, edenic state and,

“adulteration of *caritas*” suggests true *caritas*. Had Francesca chosen to participate in the universe of God (rather than building her own) and had the object of Francesca’s desires been spiritual as opposed to carnal, she could have returned to Eden (*Purgatorio* XXVIII), and ultimately gone to Paradise (see the third Heaven, Venus, of *Paradiso* VIII). This evocation in Hell of Paradise, exemplified through the simile of the doves referring both to *lussuria* and a sign from God of the Holy Spirit, shows that “the infernal scene lives side by side with the paradisaal scene in irreconcilable opposition”.¹⁶⁹ This in turn points to a freedom of choice as to not only destiny, whether Heaven or Hell (apart from Dante’s notion of grace), but the identity of the individual which determines the destiny. The invocation of the paradisaal is echoed by the invocation in Francesca of the possibility of Beatrice.¹⁷⁰ She could have been like Beatrice, the *aporia* or lack of passage (of Hell) could have been the *poros* (resource or “pathway” to Heaven), a point which we will examine in the next chapter. Of consequence here however is that Francesca could have *chosen* otherwise, could have gone to Heaven, could have been like Beatrice, and this acts as a judgment upon her and a condemnation of her.

Considering the Canto as a whole, we have seen how regardless of the extreme beauty of the text and Francesca’s intoxicating charm, nonetheless Dante presents Francesca in a very negative light, showing that his major concern remains the conflict of

correspondingly, an adulteration of *caritas*. In other words, in Paolo’s and Francesca’s inordinate love there is an ambivalence which makes it appear as true love, directed to the ultimate good.” (Masciandaro, p. 78)

¹⁶⁹ Masciandaro, p. 78.

¹⁷⁰ Shapero suggests the like when she writes, “The loveliness of Francesca’s form tells us only that it would have been worthy of use in the service of virtue. But as a symbol of her principal delight and Paolo’s it became unworthy and was taken from her. She is the outward semblance of the angelic lady in every respect but one. Pride and lust move her to action that is self-assertive and concupiscent. In action she broke the physical and spiritual unity of the Lady and descended to the moral level of *pura femmina*. Among her punishments was the deprivation of *bella persona*. But just as Dante never defamed the art that created her prototype he did not turn her into a monster. She speaks in the refined accents proper to the ambiance she represents. Morally condemned without reprieve, aesthetically a part of her is accorded leniency. Dante apparently had no wish to destroy the ‘beautiful form’ of love poetry; yet the need to condemn its message is evident. Francesca is a warning to all who would transform the Lady into a Woman, and she is as such the embodiment and summary rejection of courtly love.” (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 106)

This positive possibility open to Francesca is represented by Francis of Assisi in *Paradiso* who, aside from sharing the same name, is also of aristocratic birth prior to joining the religious orders and furthermore possessed a great love for the tradition of the courts and chivalry. “The saint, whose very name indicates how fashionable the French culture was, and who sang in French when jolly, liked to name his companions after the characters in the Round Table, and [his] followers were nicknamed *ioculatores domini* (minstrels of the Lord).” (Brand and Pertile, *Cambridge History*, p. 5) Francis can be understood to be the redeemed masculine version of Francesca.

aesthetics and ethics. The intricate, fascinating and captivating depiction of Francesca is expressed not only in her beautiful, passionate language but also through Dante's use of pagan and Christian myth, expressed as her creation of her own myth marking the moment of her making and undoing. The expressiveness by which this myth is recounted and her appropriation of different literary techniques and theories of love to express herself, regardless of getting them wrong or misusing them, contribute to the most exquisite portrayal of any individual in the *Commedia*, which captivates the heart of all who read Canto V, at least for a moment. She wins us over because we love her, we relate to her desires and struggles and we are horrified by her punishment. Upon no other figure except, possibly, Beatrice, has Dante lavished so much attention or so exquisitely laboured with the complexities of myth and Biblical story, literary forms and philosophy, to represent with delicate eloquence a single soul. For this reason, taken together with Canto V's aesthetic unity, many commentators have seen Canto V as separate entity from the rest of the *Commedia*. However, as we have shown it is a part of the whole, a part—and soul—being condemned by the rest, showing ethics, as enforced through the choice of myth and Biblical story, to triumph, hence Francesca's negative representation.

This negativity is initially hidden by the beauty of the text and its portrayal of courtly love. However, through Dante's use of Classical myth as seen in "The Venus of Rimini", and through his implementation of the Fall of man in Genesis, which in this chapter "Falling for Francesca" simultaneously marks out medieval Christianity's conflict with and judgement upon courtly love, Dante shows how much appearances deceive. She who could have been part of Heaven, chose her personal heaven which became her hell, making Francesca the first substantial marker and trap of Hell recalling the words above the gate of Hell, "Abandon every hope, ye that enter" (Canto III, 9). Here we too hear the tears of Paolo, validating Minos' ambiguous warning (V, 19-20) to be careful of that in which we put our trust, hinting that Dante and we ourselves should not trust the words of Francesca. Furthermore, given this reading of Francesca, which shows through "The Venus of Rimini" the lovers' togetherness to be part of their punishment and Francesca to be a degraded finite image of the pagan goddess Venus, and how in "Falling for Francesca" she represents Eve, causing men to fall to their deaths, it seems just to conclude that this canto, regardless of its exquisite beauty, was not written

as a tribute to Francesca's family as De Sanctis (p. 34) {and Foscolo}, Carrol (p. 95) Grandgent (p. 47-8) and so many others have thought. Instead it represents an exemplification of and judgment upon uncontrolled earthly *eros/cupiditas* which, causing the rift between the aesthetic and ethics, preys upon and overtakes the individual, destroying and corrupting all beauty within them regardless of appearances, and ultimately for Dante leaves them despairing, impoverished and imprisoned in Hell.

XII.

BEATRICE AS *POROS*

Turning back for a moment to our discussion of courtly love, it will be recalled that within the conflict of Christianity and courtly love, though the poet knows it to be unrighteous, the *midons* is raised above God, thus violating on some level the poet's conscience. Given this trespass, many of the Troubadours became religious at the end of their lives so, as Singleton ("From Love to *Caritas*", p. 65) writes, "recantation... became part of the tradition." We have seen how Francesca imbibed and internalized the notions of courtly love so that she became a full articulation of them and their conflict with Christianity. As she is a seductress leading Paolo, Dante and the reader astray, away from God, so courtly love seduces its followers, causing them to abandon what Dante believed to be the true religion, Christianity, to follow false religion ("myth," 2 Timothy 4:4), its pagan parody. This seduction or fall is enacted by Dante falling into the trap of Francesca, which as we have seen is condemned and ends in death, dramatized by the pilgrim fainting, thereby showing Dante's condemnation of courtly love. Yet as with the tradition of the Troubadours in which recantation is part of the tradition of courtly love, so Dante is shown to repent. Though the journey up Mount Purgatory reveals a desire to repent and to restore his relation with God, only at the top of Mount Purgatory (*Purgatorio*, XXX, XXXI), when Beatrice reemerges and rebukes Dante severely, is he brought to recant fully his past actions and views on love. For this reason my discussion of Beatrice will first centre upon her rebuke of Dante. While prioritizing and adhering to Christianity and condemning courtly love, elements of the tradition of courtly love are redeemed and brought into accord with Christianity. In so doing, in contrast to his predecessors, through the figure of Beatrice, who unlike Francesca remains idealized, Dante seems to some extent to have achieved a resolution of the conflict of Christianity and courtly love.

We have thus far examined Dante's seduction by Francesca, which enacts his fall from "innocence", thus placing her as an Eve-figure. We shall now turn to the moment after his arduous climb up the mountain of Purgatory when, having entered the Earthly Paradise, he encounters Beatrice. Beatrice his first love served from his youth to cultivate

in him the pursuit of virtue, transforming his ordinary life into a new life until her death, at which time Dante abandoned his spiritual path of virtue. Given that Beatrice, out of concern for Dante's soul, descended into Hell to plead with Virgil to act as Dante's guide (*Inferno* II) through Hell and up the mountain of Purgatory, and given that Beatrice takes over the role of guide from Virgil, bringing Dante to repentance and overseeing the enactment of the process of Christian conversion described in Acts 2: 36-8, she is the antithesis of Francesca. This is true in both the pagan sense as representing heavenly Venus, and with regard to Christianity as a representative of Christ, an expression of God's *caritas*. Rather than leading Dante astray, her function is to lead him to reconciliation with God and salvation. Through examining Dante's encounter with Beatrice in *Purgatorio* XXX and XXXI, we shall identify her role as the instrument of God leading to Dante's salvation, *poros*, a "way or passage," to God, as opposed to the lack, *penia*, or privation of good leading Dante away from God into the *aporia* or lack of way in which Francesca finds herself in Hell, the ultimate state of *penia*. Beatrice is furthermore a *poros*-figure according to the third meaning of the term, the Plotinian meaning of *poros* as "resource, wealth and abundance" from Heaven as reinterpreted by Christianity, God pouring out his love upon Dante. But further, through displaying the structure of *Purgatorio* XXX with regard to the *Aeneid* which leads, at the end of XXX and in XXXI to an exemplifying of a biblical conversion whereby heavenly *eros* is converted to *caritas*, we shall observe an undermining of the Francesca of *Inferno* V in a way that serves to demonstrate the opposition of two loves, one a sinful carnal love and the other, Dante's love of Beatrice, which focuses upon virtue and righteousness, ultimately transcending heavenly *eros* to *caritas* which motivates and supports Dante in his pursuit of God, bringing him to redemption. Given this opposition, Dante will recant his love of Francesca ultimately for his love of Beatrice leading to God.

The Transition "From Love to *Caritas*"

Given this dichotomy of love in which Francesca embodies the *penia* of *cupiditas*

while Beatrice exemplifies the *poros* of *caritas*,¹ and given that Francesca could have been a Beatrice, we shall briefly turn, in order to make the transition from our discussion of Francesca to Beatrice, to the *Vita Nuova* which, as Singleton illustrates, marks out the transition “From Love to *Caritas*”.²

This transition between *eros* and *caritas* is marked out in the *Vita Nuova* where Dante’s love for Beatrice, which initially begins as a *penia*-dominant form of *eros* (though not entirely so³), transforms into a *poros*-dominant form of love, *caritas*, so that love of Beatrice leads to the contemplation of God. Holmes (p. 11) notes that the initial conception of love in the *Vita Nuova* resembles courtly love and the “early phase of courtly love poetry”.⁴ However he holds Dante’s later notion of love in the same period to be Cavalcantian, reducing Dante to “fainting, illness and almost death”, which degenerates further to obsession and moral indifference aligned with Francesca’s type of love. Nardi (*Filosofia dell’Amore*, p. 58) believes that Dante in the *Convivio* acknowledged that his love for Beatrice was initially the lower type of love.

Dante’s love of Beatrice, however, changes. Holmes (p. 12) notes the transition from a negative destructive form of love to one of praise and adoration of Beatrice, “so wonderful on earth that heaven craved her presence”, leading to virtue which caused the poet to rise to heaven where she is enthroned. More precisely and informatively Singleton marks out this change through *Amor*. He notes that though *Amor* initially is represented as a personification, shortly before the death of Beatrice personified *Amor* makes his farewell by saying, “And whoever should consider subtly would call that Beatrice Love because of the great resemblance which she has to me” (*Vita Nuova* XXIV),⁵ after which Beatrice replaces *Amor* and through her death directs Dante towards heaven. Though Dante initially chooses not to follow, her death marks the transition between *amor* and *caritas* as the passionate desire of *amor* is redirected and transformed into *caritas* through the grace of God, so at this point, as Singleton points out, following the tradition of recantation in the poetry of the Troubadours, Dante recants the *amor* of the courtly love

¹ Cambon, p. 55.

² Also see Cambon, pp. 55-56.

³ This conception of *eros* is not entirely *penia*-dominant in that it ultimately transforms into *caritas*.

⁴ See also Menocal, *Writing in Dante’s Cult of Truth*, pp. 33-34.

⁵ Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*” p. 57.

tradition for the Christian understanding that God is love, *caritas*.⁶ Yet as she enabled Dante to make this transition and, as we shall see, returns to help him, Beatrice is herself viewed as a miracle and gift from God, “a bearer of beatitude”⁷, a channel or *poros* of God’s abundant love to Dante which leads him back to God.⁸

⁶ Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”, p. 75.

⁷ Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”, pp. 76-7.

⁸ This synthesis of *eros* and *agape* in *caritas* shows Dante’s adherence to the Augustinian notion of *caritas* in which desire for God is given by God while not being fully distinguished from the, arguably acquisitive, desire for God as supreme good.

BEATRICE AS HEAVENLY VENUS

Upon meeting Dante in the earthly Paradise, Beatrice sharply demands, “How durst thou approach the mountain? Didst thou not know that here man is happy?” (XXX, 74-5) These questions in conjunction with Beatrice’s harshness have excited considerable dispute among commentators but when clearly understood indicate a parallel with Aeneas’ encounter with his mother Venus in *Aeneid* I, 384-406, suggesting that like Francesca, Beatrice is also a Venus figure though of a heavenly maternal sort.

In order more fully to understand Beatrice’s question we must turn to this section of the *Aeneid* which Dante employed, in order to understand his intentions. In *Aeneid* I, 384 amidst Aeneas’ sorrow and moaning concerning the devastation of Troy, his personal loss and hardship implying that the gods are not with him, Venus disguised as a huntress aggressively interrupts him. “But Venus chose to hear no more complaints and broke in, midway through his bitterness: ‘Whoever you are, I doubt Heaven is unfriendly to you, as you still breath life-giving air on your approach to the Tyrian town’” after which she tells him that his friends and ships are safely in or entering port, indicating that the gods have protected and preserved him so he should be happy.

Our examination of *Purgatorio* XXX will note the parallels with *Aeneid* I as they arise and explore their implications for the interpretation of the Canto. Such parallels include a female divine-figure of love represented through the mixing of erotic and divine images, the covering of one’s identity through veil or disguise, the ability to discern this identity, present discontent due to the past and a firm “maternal” rebuke. Though no individual element alone demonstrates a significant correspondence between Beatrice and the Venus of *Aeneid* I, when all the elements are taken together the cumulative effect is powerful. Ultimately, these parallels throw an instructive light on the person and behaviour of Beatrice, both here and in the *Commedia* more generally.

i. **A Divine Figure of Love Represented Through the Mixing of Erotic and Divine Imagery**

Given that Venus is the goddess of love and beauty, her representation mixes erotic imagery of physical beauty with spiritual/divine imagery. “Her nape shone, her ambrosial hair exhaled Divine perfume, her gown rippled full length, and by her stride she showed herself a goddess” (*Aeneid*, I, 401-3). This indicates that her beauty is derived from a heavenly source and simultaneously this further indicates a spiritualization of desire.

Similarly Beatrice, while maintaining her Christian identity and imagery, likewise coming from heaven, arrives evoking a mixture of erotic and divine imagery, causing and articulating the spiritualization of desire. Following the arrival in the Earthly Paradise of the imagistic “pageant of revelation” (Sinclair, p. 377)⁹, the pageant passes and one of the “truthful company”(XXX, 10) of elders, probably Solomon¹⁰, “like a messenger from heaven, called three times, singing: *Veni, sponsa, de Libano* (Come, bride, from Lebanon)” (XXX, 10-11) echoing “Come bride from Lebanon” of Song of Songs 4:8. As the Song of Songs is a passionate love poem full of sensual/sexual imagery, perhaps by Solomon, probably concerning himself and his bride, but reinterpreted as Dante would have understood it by the church fathers to describe Christ’s relationship with the church as the image of the soul espoused to Christ,¹¹ this is therefore appropriate with regard to soon-to-be-arriving Beatrice. Beatrice, who evoked passionate bewilderment, stupor and fainting in his youth and continues to do so in *Purgatorio* XXX, 33-48, Dante now sees as a blessed soul, embodying God’s grace, likened to Christ, sent as his only means of salvation, enacting the way Christ saves the church. The reclad voices singing Hallelujah

⁹ See also Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 177.

¹⁰ Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 729-30.

¹¹ This suggests that the soul coming who is Dante’s old love Beatrice, who represents Christ and is going to be reunited with Dante, will oversee the wedding of Dante and Christ, Dante’s conversion. Singleton reinforces this reading by reference to the later image of the crowning of Dante by the Muses infusing virtue in *Purgatorio* XXXI, echoing “Come from Lebanon, come and you shall be crowned”. However this simultaneously suggests that the soul coming is wedded to Christ, indicating that Beatrice symbolizes the Church. Though Singleton (*Commentary*, p. 730) disagrees with this on the grounds that the Church, the *sponsa* in the orthodox interpretation, is already represented by the chariot, nevertheless, as the chariot carries one of its members to Dante, it is implicit that she is either the Church or the Spirit of the Church, the Bride of Christ herself. In this double role she fulfills two aspects of Christian life, being reunited with God, the bride of Christ herself, while also helping others to be reconciled with God. (Matthew 28:18-20)

emphasizing this salvatory role¹² “[rise] up on the divine chariot”, pointing back to the *basterna* of Solomon in Song of Songs 3:7-10.¹³ This indicates the mixing of desire of attraction of the daughters of Israel for Solomon (3:11) with the Church’s desire for Christ,¹⁴ suggesting Dante’s anticipation and passionate spiritualized longing for the arrival of Beatrice. Though suggesting an ambiguity in the nature of the desire, this desire, unlike that of Francesca’s *eros*, is curbed to spiritual ends as exemplified by the change in Dante’s love for Beatrice from *amor* to *caritas*, which Singleton demonstrates with reference to the *Vita Nuova*,¹⁵ a change which Nardi notes as involving a form of recantation.¹⁶

In *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* Dante describes the redeemed Beatrice, who evokes *Amor* in the *Vita Nuova* XXIV,¹⁷ as an expression of God’s *caritas* for him and the representative of Christ. In announcing Beatrice’s arrival the ministers of eternal life/angels cry “*Benedictus qui venis*”, and, throwing flowers, “*Manibus o date lilia plenis*”. “*Benedictus qui venis*” means “Blessed are Thou that comest”, which echoes Matthew 21:49, the moment when Christ enters into Jerusalem, the throwing of flowers suggesting the strewing of palms before Christ. Through Beatrice, Christ comes to Dante; “*Benedictus qui venis*” refers not to Beatrice but Christ¹⁸ as is later demonstrated by the reflection of the dual nature of Christ in her eyes (*Purgatorio* XXXI), so that the pageant

¹² This role is emphasized in the following lines in which, to the “voice of so great an elder”, “a hundred of ministers and messengers of eternal life” (II Thess. 1:7; see Singleton *Commentary*, pp. 732-733.) are compared to “the blessed....[rising] at the last trump each eager from his tomb”, at the last judgement (John 5:28). “The reclad voices singing Hallelujah” (XXX, 15), evoke the victory of Christ over death, and images of salvation such as Revelation 14:1: “And after those things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 731; Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 583).

¹³ A *basterna* is a covered adorned vehicle lined in fabric and drawn by two animals used to carry aristocratic ladies on journeys (see Singleton *Commentary*, pp. 731-2). As this *basterna* carrying Beatrice is drawn by the dual nature of Christ, this image indicates the merging of Christianity with courtly love in Beatrice as both the *midons* and the representative of God.

¹⁴ See Moore, “The Reproaches of Beatrice”, Third Series, pp. 251-252 note on *Purg.* XXXI (p. 352 on parallel from life of Bishop Ken).

¹⁵ Singleton, “From Love to *Caritas*”.

¹⁶ Nardi, “*Filosofia del'Amore*”, p. 58.

¹⁷ Also see *Vita Nuova*, I-II.

¹⁸ Rather than “Blessed is He who cometh” Dante writes “Blessed are Thou that comest” changing *venit*, ‘cometh,’ to *venis*, ‘comest’ (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 584). He maintains the masculine form so that while it is “applied to Beatrice, who is about to appear, [it] retains its original reference to Christ” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 325). In this way Dante avoids the conflict between *Ma Dame et Mon Dieu*, making the love of *Ma Dame* serve *Mon Dieu*, and courtly love serve Christianity. It avoids possible heresies like those committed by the Troubadour poets, the forefathers of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. This tendency within Dante’s poetry is evident given that the medieval Church censured the religious terminology used to describe Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* prior to publication. (Williams, *Descent of the Dove*, Ch. VI)

is really welcoming Christ in Beatrice, Beatrice transformed.¹⁹ This indicates that Beatrice, who has come down from heaven echoing the *Logos* becoming flesh (John 1:1-18), will be Christ's instrument by which God will save the soul of Dante.²⁰

ii. Concealing Identity by Disguise or Veil

Both the Venus of the *Aeneid* and Beatrice cover or conceal their identity. Like many divine beings in antiquity Venus is disguised, in this case as a huntress, “[wearing] a girl's shape...a Spartan girl” (215). Like the rising sun,²¹ Beatrice emerges “amidst a cloud of angels tossing flowers”,²² “a lady appeared to me, girl with olive over a white veil, clothed under a green mantle with the colour of living flame”(XXX, 30-33),²³ the veil covering her face.

Beatrice arrives as a redeemed soul covered with a veil representing simultaneously the Host and the Church. As “*Benedictus qui venit*” in Mass announces “the expectation of Christ's bodily presence” (Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 22-23) in the form of the Host which arrives veiled so Dante relates Beatrice to Christ's body and blood which take the form of the Host. (See Sinclair, p. 415-6²⁴ and Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 311) In this way Dante suggests Beatrice is his bread of life, the means by which Christ is conveyed to him and reaches him. However simultaneously, as we have seen, as a redeemed soul

¹⁹ Unlike Minos' warning to beware “in whom thou trusteth” (*Inferno* V, 22), here these prophecies indicate that Beatrice who is coming can be trusted as she who “comes in the name of the Lord”.

²⁰ Beatrice concerning “the way of salvation of the individual soul...[represents] the ‘God-bearing image’ which manifests the glory of God in His creation, and becomes a personal sacramental experience” (Sayers, *Commentary*, pp. 310-11). Beatrice arrives as a particularized extension of God's plan of salvation directed at Dante. However, through this modified citation Dante is making a correlation of Beatrice's arrival with the coming of Christ, and thereby is suggesting that on some level she symbolizes Christ for Dante.

²¹ The rising sun is usually associated with the coming of Christ. See Luke, 1:78-79; also Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 736, referring to Bernard of Clairvaux on Advent.

²² See Acts 1:9 and *Vita Nuova* (XXIII, 25); also Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 737.

²³ Francesca has no body but dreads the return of hers while Beatrice comes as a full pictorial representation with body, clothing, eyes and mouth.

²⁴ As Sinclair (p. 415) writes, “The total absence of the Eucharist from the *Purgatorio* would be strange in itself and it would be especially so in the conditions of the time, when the subject was prominently before the mind of the Church, when Aquinas had recently formulated its doctrine with authority and had written the office of Corpus Christi and hymns in honour of the Sacrament, and when, while Dante was writing these last cantos of the *Purgatorio*, the observance of Corpus Christi was authorized anew by Pope Clement V... Such a reading of the scene, if it can be made good, adds to it where it stands a high significance and solemnity. It is a fair question whether it is credible that Dante—‘a transubstantially-minded man’ as he has been well called—should have totally ignored the Eucharist in such a work as the *Purgatorio*; and if the Eucharist is not here it is nowhere in the *Divine Comedy*.”

herself, the veiled Beatrice represents the Bride of Christ, the Church (Revelation 21: 2),²⁵ as well as the spirit of truth or Revelation of the Church.²⁶

Furthermore, wearing the colours of the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity (white, green and red), she is “garlanded with olive over a white veil” which has both pagan and Christian implications. The olive frond being a symbol of peace forms a crown, the crown of Minerva which signifies wisdom, the olive tree being sacred to Athena/Minerva the goddess of wisdom.²⁷ As the antithesis of Francesca who was connected with earthly Venus, here Beatrice is associated with Athena/Minerva.²⁸ Given that the Theological virtues are veiled and crowned with wisdom, this may suggest that she is *Sapientia*, wisdom of a divine nature and origin, which is yet to be revealed.²⁹

iii. Easily Discernible despite Concealment

However despite the concealment of the identities of Venus and Beatrice both Aeneas and Dante immediately recognize them. Though Venus “wore a girl’s shape” (215), Aeneas “[knew] her for his mother” (204). She was betrayed by her beauty (329), her voice (330) and her “stride [which] showed her a goddess” (406). Analogously Dante “trembling in [Beatrice’s] presence, without having more knowledge by the eyes, through hidden virtue that came from her, felt old love’s great power” (XXX, 36-9); Dante instantly recognizes the presence of Beatrice³⁰, who from childhood³¹ provoked this type

²⁵ Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 109; Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 311.

²⁶ Grandgent, *Commentary*, pp. 582-3 and Sinclair, p. 411.

²⁷ Grandgent, *Commentary*, 584, Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 738, Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 313. “Buti sees these several meanings here in the crown of olives: ‘*Si significa la pace, la quale è nell’animo quando s’è adornato di fede, e a vittoria . . . e significa la sapienza: imperò che l’ulivo è consecrato a Pallade che è la Dia de la sapienza, la quale è corona de la santa Teologia.*’” (Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 738-9).

²⁸ Significantly in Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Gods* (which Dante probably used in his representation of Francesca and Paolo as Aphrodite and Mars), Athena is self-controlled, sober and wise, clad in armour. Faced with her sobriety and aggression towards him, “such horror comes upon [Cupid], that [he trembles] in every joint, and both bow and arrow drop out of his hands....[so] that [he is] forced involuntarily to run away”. (Trans. Tooke, p. 96) Like “an admiral”, suggestive of Athena’s armour, Beatrice is shown exemplifying the wisdom and sobriety of Athena as well as seen rebuking uncontrolled *eros* in Dante, making it run away.

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:12.

³⁰ Having focused upon Beatrice’s pageant and the analogy between Christ and Beatrice, in an instant all universality and grandeur is “shorn away” and vanishes, leaving us with the individual woman Beatrice (Sinclair, p. 411), or more precisely Dante’s feelings about her (and the image that his feelings and imagination produced). (Gibert, 138-9, see *Purg.* XXXII, 1-2)

of emotional and physical reaction³² and through whom regardless of her early death³³ he had begun his “new life” as recounted through the *Vita Nuova*.³⁴ Again she holds him captive,³⁵ “trembling before her eyes”, “*di stupor, tremando, affranto*”.³⁶

iv. Discontent due to Fixation upon the Past

However, faced with visions of loveliness neither Aeneas nor Dante is happy due to a fixation upon past loss, as opposed to the divine experience, reassurance and empowerment of the present. Aeneas bemoans his great sorrow over the fall of Troy, his loss of thirteen ships and his exile from Europe and Asia (*Aeneid* 366-383). Dante, also an exile, simply and most poignantly mourns the loss of Virgil, which is most appropriate as he wrote the *Aeneid* and created Aeneas.

Dante’s sorrow can best be explored through returning to the welcoming of Beatrice, when after “*Benedictus qui venis*” the angels cry, “*Manibus, o, date lilia plenis*” (XXX, 21). Lilies have a double meaning in this context. In the Christian tradition, lilies are one of the attributes of the Virgin Mary, and the throwing of lilies welcoming Beatrice is suggestive of the throwing of palms before Jesus, as mentioned above. However on another level, we should note that this specific citation is from Virgil’s *Aeneid* VI, 867-86,³⁷ Anchises’ prophecy in the Elysian Fields concerning the soul to be born as Marcellus, the nephew and adopted son of Augustus, “doomed to die in the flower of his youth” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 312).³⁸ One remembers that Virgil, having

³¹ *Vita Nuova* II, 2, XII, 7 and Rime CXI, 1-2.

³² See *Vita Nuova* II, 4; XI, 3; XIV, 4-5; XXIV, 1; see Gilbert, p. 140. Also see XXXI, 118-119 in which Dante mentions “a thousand desires hotter than flame held my eyes on the shining eyes” which accentuates her mortal nature by describing the physical effects that he experiences as a human being in her presence (see Boyde, “Perception” for a full physiological description; also see Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 340-1).

³³ According to *Vita Nuova* XXX, 1-4, as Beatrice had died in 1290, with the exception of dreams Dante had not been in her presence for the last ten years (cf. *Purgatorio* XXXII, 2, Grandgent, *Commentary*).

³⁴ As when Dante first met her (*Vita Nuova* II.3), she is wearing the colour of living flames, red/crimson, suggesting that underneath she is still the same Beatrice.

³⁵ See Dante’s dream in *Vita Nuova* II.

³⁶ This recalls Dante’s reaction to Francesca’s seduction thus suggesting that Dante’s initial attraction to Beatrice was *amor* as distinct from *caritas*, a position held by Nardi (“*Filosofia dell’Amore*”, p. 58).

³⁷ Singleton (*Commentary*, p. 735) points out these are “the last spoken words of the sixth book of the *Aeneid*”.

³⁸ With upwelling tears Anchises cries, “Ah! child of pity, if haply thou couldst burst the harsh bonds of fate, thou shalt be Marcellus! Give me lilies with full hand: let me scatter purple flowers; let me heap o’er my offspring’s shade at least these gifts and fulfil an unavailing service.”

been born in a pagan context prior to Christ, was also in an important sense doomed from birth.

This reference to the *Aeneid* acts indeed as the most extraordinarily touching farewell to Virgil, who on the arrival of Beatrice must return to Hell.³⁹ Regardless of his fate, this verse pays the highest tribute to him since his poetry is placed on the same level as the Bible, and is spoken through the mouths of angels,⁴⁰ thereby underlining Virgil's cooperation with Heaven in the saving of Dante's soul.⁴¹ By placing this citation in the mouths of angels, together with the Bible, Dante further extends its meaning suggesting Virgil to be prophesying in *Aeneid* VI, 867-86 the early death of Christ.⁴² This further suggests Virgil prepared the way for the Christ-like figure Beatrice, as John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ.⁴³ In this way he participated in the opening of the possibility of salvation and reconciliation with God for Dante, though that possibility remains closed to Virgil.

Despite Dante's journey having been motivated by the desire to see Beatrice, upon her arrival, trembling and bewildered seeking "consolation and reassurance" in his friend, master, father and teacher, Dante turns back to Virgil,⁴⁴ as "a little child that runs to his mother when he is afraid or in distress".⁴⁵ Dante states "Not a drop of blood is left

³⁹ Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 734-5.

⁴⁰ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 326 and Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 584.

⁴¹ At the moment the angels recite this phrase we do not read it as the realization/hint that Virgil has fulfilled his role and must redescend into Hell. Instead we read it only as the moment of fulfillment in which Heaven is acknowledging Virgil's great contribution to saving the soul of Dante, that without Virgil's assistance both through the written *Aeneid* in Dante's education and as his guide through Hell and Purgatory, Dante may not have arrived at the top of Mount Purgatory. Therefore as Virgil shared a common goal/purpose (Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 108), cooperating with Beatrice and Heaven with regard to saving Dante's soul, the angels show their appreciation and "kinship" taking Virgil's words as their own.

⁴² By borrowing Virgil's words the angels extend them or show the extent of their meaning/implications to cover Jesus' early death. (Acts 8:33, Isaiah 52:7-8) Sayers (*Commentary*, p. 312) writes, "translated here from an occasion of pagan mourning to one of Christian rejoicing, it is at once Dante's tribute to Virgil as a prophet of Christ and a gesture of tender regret for his imminent departure". We may ask ourselves the question whether in doing this Virgil did not grasp something of the divine and in so doing might not gain access to heaven at the last Judgement, whether by his writing as here conceived, or by his action within the *Commedia* which includes preparing the way for Beatrice, or whether by prayers made by Dante when he returns, in gratitude for the help Virgil gave to Dante, the possibility of which is perhaps suggested by *Paradiso* XXX, 100-131. However, more pessimistically, Virgil only prophesied the death of Marcellus/Jesus and not his resurrection indicating that Virgil had no conception of (and therefore no faith in) a Christian resurrection. As faith is necessary for salvation (Colossians 2:12), he is without hope, and must return to Limbo.

⁴³ cf. Matthew 11:11.

⁴⁴ Sinclair, p. 411; Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, pp. 176-77.

⁴⁵ "Dolcissimo patre" becomes "la mamma" in line 44 (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 740).

in me that does not tremble; I know the marks of the ancient flame” (*Conosco i segni dell'antica fiamma*)⁴⁶ echoing *Aeneid*, iv, 23 "*Agnosco veteris vestigia flammae*" (I recognize the traces of the olden flame; Grandgent's translation) in which Dido refers to her ancient passion. Though Dante's citation of Virgil suggests their mutual understanding concerning love's signs and associated "rapture",⁴⁷ Dido refers to destructive erotic passion, a very different type of love⁴⁸ from the constructive love which Dante is experiencing for Beatrice. Though Dante and Virgil are both critical of Dido's *eros*, this contrast is brought to the fore in that Virgil disappears as if he has slipped between these two loves. This disappearance suggests that Dante's love is beyond Virgil's conception, indicating that Dante has stepped beyond Virgil⁴⁹ from virtuous heavenly *eros* of the virtuous pagan to *caritas*.⁵⁰

At this point Virgil, to Dante's shock and utter despair is gone. "But Virgil had left us bereft of him, Virgil sweetest father, Virgil to whom I gave myself for my salvation." Echoing Orpheus despairingly looking back seeing Eurydice descending back down to Hell after all his efforts to rescue her, Dante looks behind him to find Virgil gone: Virgil, whose guidance led him out of Hell, but who could not free himself from its

⁴⁶ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 740.

⁴⁷ Brandeis, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Brandeis, p. 111. -

⁴⁹ Furthermore, considering that Dido's carnal *eros* is self-destructive leading to suicide, through using this line Dante shows a recognition of Dido's destructive love from which he turns away through directing the passionate aspect of it to positive ends, reconciling it with the Christian tradition. However, "Through a rectification of Dido's love for Aeneas [Dante betrays]... its original sense. In doctrinal terms, the inversion of the object of love (from Dido to Beatrice) serves to postulate the ultimate discontinuity and inevitable caesura between fallen nature and the order of grace." (Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 186) Virgil as a virtuous pagan likewise condemned Dido's *eros* seeing Aeneas' departure as necessary. However though the relation of Aeneas with Dido and his leaving of her is part of Virgil's understanding of the overall plan of Jupiter and Fate to make Aeneas into a hero who will found Rome, which will become the centre of the Christian world, for Dante nonetheless his understanding of love does not extend beyond heavenly *eros*, love of virtue, to *caritas*. Therefore in line 48 through showing the discontinuity between fallen man and grace, Dante the poet is simultaneously embracing Virgil but also, through theologically stepping away from him who did not follow the transition from *amor* to *caritas* to its completion, making a "farewell gesture to his mentor" (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 326).

⁵⁰ Like Augustine Dante seems not to clearly distinguish heavenly *eros* from longing for God, *caritas*. (See Nygren, p. 470) As in Plato's *Symposium*, passionate love in itself remains the same, but is defined by its object whether carnal or spiritual and therefore, depending upon its object, it becomes a different type of love. Here likewise, depending upon its object love changes forms which promote either life or death, righteousness or sin. However given that there are two types of love, *amor* and *caritas*, for Dante true love, passionate desire, is now directed away from the finite and towards the infinite, promoting life and turning away from death. Yet this remains confusing as the signs of both loves are the same, causing the same "rapture". Furthermore, "each reader will notice with more or less of shock that Beatrice does not answer in kind the pilgrim's flood of emotion" (Brandeis, "Beatrice" in *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 111).

hold (*Inferno* I, 63). Like Orpheus to Eurydice as she descends back into Hades,⁵¹ and as Daedalus called three times to Icarus as his son's wings melted making him fall into the sea and drown, Dante thrice repeated the name Virgil.⁵² In contrast to Daedalus, Virgil was able to save his "son" but could not save himself.⁵³ Furthermore neither could Dante by his craft/poetry nor by any other action do anything to save his "*dolcissimo padre*".⁵⁴

Dante beside himself with grief states, "Nor did all the ancient mother lost avail my cheeks washed with dew that they should not be stained again with tears." (52-4) What Eve the first mother lost, the "Earthly paradise" (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 52), had just been regained (XXIX) and therefore should be the source of much joy and gladness of heart. Yet this victory/joy could not prevent Dante's cheeks, which had been washed in dew by Virgil at the base of Mount Purgatory (I:121-129) cleansing them from the soot of Hell which had darkened them, from "being darkened once more by weeping" (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 585)⁵⁵ suggesting a re-descent into Hell. Dante is so devoted to Virgil that the pilgrim's heart and mind slide back down into Hell with him,⁵⁶ as Beatrice seems to notice when in XXX: line 74, she says "How durst thou approach the mountain?" The reference to "mother lost" and the allusion to Virgil's maternal gesture of washing Dante's cheeks in *Purgatorio* I :24 point to Dante's awareness of his personal loss,⁵⁷ Virgil having acted as both father and mother to him (see line 44). For this reason even getting back all that was lost in the original Fall of man could not prevent him from mourning his loss of Virgil.

⁵¹ "It is also by deliberate design that Virgil is named once in vs. 46, then thrice in a single tercet observing that he is gone (vss. 49-51), then finally once in vs. 55 by Beatrice, following the unique naming of Dante himself" echoing his *Georgics* IV, 525-27 (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 741).

⁵² See *Ars Amatoria* 2.93- 95 and Smarr, "Poets of Love and Exile", p. 146.

⁵³ This echoes Christ on the cross being mocked; "He saved others....but he can not save himself" (Mark 15:31). However Christ as the Son of God could have saved himself. This reference points to the fact that Virgil at best is a prophet of Christ, though not a redeemed prophet like John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:3, Isaiah 40:3) nor a "true son" (Hebrews 12:7-8). Virgil prepares the way for Beatrice, though Virgil is neither a follower of Christ nor will be redeemed. As we noted earlier, Virgil's description of Marcellus' early death, though perhaps acting as a prophecy concerning Christ's death, shows no understanding of a resurrection.

⁵⁴ "The lament of Dante for his '*dolcissimo padre*' (*Purg.* 30.50; 'sweetest father') remains a warning that human art and intelligence are not sufficient for salvation." (Smarr, *Poets of Love and Exile*, p. 146)

⁵⁵ "*Ivi mi fece tutto scoperto quel color che l'inferno mi nascose.*" (*Purg.* I, 128-9). "Compare '*atre*' with the Latin '*ater*', 'black,' 'dark,' and see *Inf.* VI, 16" (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 742).

⁵⁶ This is also true of the reader (Sayers *Further Papers on Dante*: "Dante's Virgil" pp. 59-60).

⁵⁷ Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 180.

v. The Rebuke

To the sorrow of both Aeneas and Dante, Venus and Beatrice respond with a rebuke showing no sympathy. In the *Aeneid*, Venus will not tolerate hearing Aeneas moan. As previously quoted, “Venus chose to hear no more complaints and broke in midway through his bitterness” (384-5), interrupted him saying, “I doubt Heaven is unfriendly to you, as you still breath life-giving air”; as you are still alive, the gods have protected you so you are blessed and should be grateful.

Similarly, though far more harshly faced with Dante’s despair, Beatrice rebukes him stating, “Dante, because Virgil leaves thee weep not, weep not yet, for thou must weep for another sword” (55-57). No longer treated as a universal pilgrim, Dante is named here for the first and only time⁵⁸ indicating that the moment is a dramatically real event⁵⁹ in the life of a real person who before the world makes a personal confession of his sins.⁶⁰ Furthermore this represents a personal moment of introspection and self-knowledge after which he can change.⁶¹ This naming therefore indicates a shift from the universal man to personal Dante,⁶² suggesting that though the way of salvation is universal, the same for all people, the conversion itself is extremely personal involving a personal confession and repentance.

In threatening/warning that Dante “must weep for another sword,” Beatrice refers to a sword other than the wound left from the emotional loss of Virgil. She sees the condemnation of Virgil unsentimentally in terms of the righteous judgement of God.⁶³ Though Musa thinks this second “‘wound’ will be that caused by the harsh words of Beatrice” (Musa, *Commentary* line 55-57), Grandgent more precisely refers to

⁵⁸ This is the “first time that the Pilgrim hears his own name during his journey” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 326), or more accurately names himself. An author naming himself in his work was normally viewed as “egotistical and unbecoming” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 313), “except on needful occasion” as stated by Dante (*Convivio* I, ii, 3). (see Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 744)

⁵⁹ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 743, Musa *Commentary*, p. 327.

⁶⁰ As a personal confession see Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 743; Grandgent, Introduction 31, and *Commentary*, pp. 582-3; also Mazzotta (*Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 186) who notes parallels with the autobiographical confessions of Augustine.

⁶¹ Sinclair, p. 411.

⁶² Musa, *Commentary*, p. 327, and Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 743.

⁶³ “Beatrice’s will is perfectly conformed to God’s [so] that she desires what He desires and rejoices in His judgement. It is thus implicit that she takes pleasure in God’s damnation of Virgil to Limbo, where he must spend eternity in hopeless desire for the beatific vision. Her attitude, like her language, is relentlessly economical: she wastes no pity on one whose condition cannot be changed.” (Chiampi, pp. 51-53)

the Word of God of Hebrews 4: 12, which is “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”. Therefore although Virgil’s departure cut Dante’s heart, the true pain and wound which is yet to come will be caused by the word of God, which in this context comes through Beatrice, and which will judge and convict Dante of his sins. This judgement is intensified and impressed upon him by her harsh words which act as a spur (Hebrews 10: 24), though it also may suggest the avenging sword of God if he does not repent.⁶⁴

vi. The Difference

Beatrice is thus shockingly different from what Virgil leads us to expect and what we know of Beatrice through the *Vita Nuova*. Firstly, in contrast to Virgil’s description of Beatrice as a “*donna angelica*” coming with shining eyes (*Purg.* XXVII, 136), she appears a severe mother or *madre superba* (XXX, 79)⁶⁵, which recalls that Venus too is the mother of Aeneas (*Aeneid* I, 404, 406). Secondly in contrast to the image in the *Vita Nuova* of a gentle girl “crowned and clothed with humility”, Beatrice is represented as harsh, indignant and dominating.⁶⁶ This image is perpetuated in line 59 by Dante’s masculine authoritarian description of Beatrice as “an admiral who goes to poop and prow to see the men that serve on the other ships and to hearten them in their work”. Though Musa through Porena minimizes the implications of this image⁶⁷, Shapero’s strong reading heavily stresses this masculinization of Beatrice concerning “role and mastery” through a comparison of her and Ulysses (which results in the feminization of both Dante and Virgil).⁶⁸ Supported by line 71 “Royally, still stern in her bearing”, Singleton most appropriately explains that this simile “[conveys] the regal and haughty bearing of Beatrice (cf. vs. 70: ‘*regalmente,*’ ‘*proterva*’),⁶⁹ as that of a great personage,

⁶⁴ Revelation, 19: 15; also Shapero, *Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul*, p. 128.

⁶⁵ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 742.

⁶⁶ Gilbert, pp. 141-6.

⁶⁷ Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 326-7.

⁶⁸ Shapero, *Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul*, p. 128; see *Aeneid* X, 224-275.

⁶⁹ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 742; Gilbert (pp. 141-6) translates *proterva* as “haughty”, noting that this adjective “does not fit the lady of the *Vita Nuova*”, while Grandgent (*Commentary*, p. 586) translates it as “wrathful”, “her anger [showing] itself in the impetuosity of the following speech”.

such as a... king”,⁷⁰ recalling the fact that as a heavenly Venus-figure she is goddess-like, superior to men⁷¹ and therefore to Dante.

However unlike Venus who “[teases her] son so often with disguises” (*Aeneid*, I, 406) and keeps her identity secret, Beatrice reveals her identity and ultimately unveils her eyes XXXI and her mouth in the gap between XXXI and XXXII. She continued “like one who while he speaks holds back his hottest words; Look at me well; I am, I am indeed Beatrice” (XXX, 71-76). Having addressed Dante by name she now identifies herself or confirms her identity as the verse seems to suggest Dante is squinting at her through her veil.⁷² This line accentuates the sharpness of her tongue⁷³ representing her as a particular individual. However, when Musa interprets these lines, “I am that Beatrice that you abandoned; you have still to know what I, Beatrice represent!” he underlines the fact that still Dante does not know what he has abandoned, a lack of knowledge which is dramatized in that she is still veiled. Only at the end of XXXI when she unveils her mouth will he begin to understand the extent to which she transcends the particular, and therefore to what extent he missed the mark (*hamartia*) in abandoning her, and therefore is deserving of her harsh treatment.

vii. The Question

Returning to the original question with which this section opened, “*Come degnasti d’accedere al monte?*”, we mentioned that it can be read several ways. Sinclair translates line 74 as “How durst thou approach the mountain?” In somewhat similar spirit, Grandgent and Singleton translate it as “How is it that you deigned to climb?” which suggests the sharply sarcastic attitude mixing “how did you?” and “How dare you approach the mountain!?” Differently, and less conservatively, Musa translates line 74 as

⁷⁰ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 742.

⁷¹ This is emphasized by the use of the word “*ministra*” echoing *Aeneid* VI, 302, “Unaided, he poles the boat, tends the sails” (Grandgent, p. 586).

⁷² Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 746.

⁷³ Some have considered this sharpness to be sarcasm. (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 745) However, also quite appropriately Musa notes, “what I have translated as ‘look at me!’ is in the original *guardaci ben*, in which I have taken the *ci* to mean ‘here’. It could, of course, represent the first person plural, being the plural of majesty. In that case, the rest of the line, *ben son Beatrice*, must be changed to *ben sem*. To me the mixture of sarcasm with the plural of majesty is hardly appropriate”. (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 327)

“So, you at last have deigned to climb the mountain?” implying that he is too slow in his ascent⁷⁴ and simultaneously that she is eager for his salvation.⁷⁵ The passage can be read in any of the three ways; however they can be combined to reveal Beatrice’s psychological complexity: indignant about his sin, jealous and concerned to humble her lover, yet eager for Dante’s salvation. Beatrice is “easily as much a mother as a maiden and offended muse.”⁷⁶

However given the Virgilian background, Beatrice’s question, “How durst thou approach the mountain? Didst thou not know that here man is happy?” (XXX, 74-5) suggests a further range of significance. As noted above, Venus responds to Aeneas “I doubt Heaven is unfriendly to you, as you still breath life-giving air on your approach to the Tyrian town”, then tells him that his men and ships are all safe; she is indicating that the gods, specifically herself, are with him supporting and protecting him, as is evident through her pleading with Jupiter for her son earlier in *Aeneid* I: 22-24.⁷⁷ For this reason Aeneas should be grateful and happy, not focused upon what he has lost but upon what he possesses. Therefore, taking into consideration the connection of *Purgatorio* XXX, 74-75 with *Aeneid* I: 384-406, Singleton is correct when he indicates that Beatrice is referring to the fact that she helped Dante to climb the mountain,⁷⁸ and went to greater lengths to save him, empowered and motivated by God. God has rescued him, therefore

⁷⁴ “From his point of view, these sarcastic words of Beatrice are not meant to be taken literally. She is reproaching the Pilgrim, for his slowness in learning what constitutes true human bliss.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 327) Cf. Guinevere’s punishment of Lancelot for not mounting the cart quickly enough.

⁷⁵ Despite Musa’s reading of line 74 that Beatrice seeks Dante’s rapid ascent and transhumanization, Singleton’s reading of Beatrice’s righteous indignation seems more accurate given the next line (XXX, 75), “*non sapei tu che qui e l'uom felice?*” Didst thou not know that here man is happy? (Sinclair trans.) By “*qui*” Beatrice means the summit of the mountain, the Earthly Paradise. Dante ought to be happy in the earthly paradise but he is not; weeping as he is for the loss of Virgil, and backsliding in his compassion for and attachment to the lost. For that reason initially Beatrice rebukes him as Virgil rebuked him in the *Inferno* for having compassion on the damned, insisting that Dante find praise in God’s just judgment (cf. Chiampi p. 51-53; also see *Inferno* VIII, 37-9). She rebukes him for possessing greater love for the damned than the heavenly, darkness than light as in John 3:19 where Jesus states, “Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil”; see also John 1: 5. (This could perhaps also be taken to indicate that Dante is more attached to reason than revelation; Beatrice is read often to personify revelation, as we shall soon see, while Virgil is frequently read to represent reason. Though in a sense accurate, reading these characters through personification produces a decidedly narrow limited vision of exceptionally human and rich individuals. See T. S. Eliot, “The Vita Nuova” in *Dante*.)

⁷⁶ Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 113.

⁷⁷ Shapero (*Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul*, p. 130-1) discusses “Beatrice’s immediate identification with male roles and mastery at the summit of Purgatory...Virgil’s *Aeneid*...provides one of the most symbolically freighted masculine images attending Beatrice’s return”. (See *Aeneid* 10:224-275)

⁷⁸ See *Purgatorio* II, 60; also Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 745; also *Paradiso* XXXI, 80-1.

his mourning so deeply the departure of Virgil is ungrateful and improper as a higher good is before him. For this reason he should be “happy” given that God and she herself have been aiding and preserving him⁷⁹ and that she, his original “Eurydice” stands before him as his new guide.⁸⁰ This does not indicate that she is personally insulted or jealous, which would make her seem all the more an actual woman,⁸¹ but that her sense of justice has been affronted as Dante has not understood the greater good and has been ungrateful when his greatest spiritual needs as well as long-term personal desires have been met by God. Furthermore this question in turn reflects back on Dante the poet as a self-critical moment where, through Beatrice challenging the pilgrim on his attitude towards Virgil, Dante the poet challenges himself (and his reader) on his (and our) own sentimentality concerning Virgil. The poet, like the pilgrim still troubled by Virgil’s condemnation, does not grasp the higher good of God’s justice, feeling deep sorrow and personal loss by the condemnation of Virgil, showing his and our incomprehension of the higher good, our limited vision of God’s justice, as Dante has portrayed it.

viii. The Responses

Aeneas and Dante respond in opposite ways when faced with the goddess or messenger of God. Aeneas challenges Venus’ deception. “You! Cruel, too! Why tease

⁷⁹ Chiampi (pp. 51-53) argues that she was a “reluctant saviour at best” and would not have left her vision of God in Heaven to journey to Limbo to help Dante of her own accord but only at the prompting of St. Lucia and Mary according to God’s will and grace (*Inferno* II, 71). She is unsympathetic to Dante’s hardships (*Inferno* II, 91-3) and cried not due to compassion but over his affront to God (*Inferno* II, 116).

However in contrast to Chiampi’s view of her total indifference, she cares for the well-being of his soul. As shown in *Inferno* II, 70, “she is the woman ‘*che soffristi per la mia salute in Inferno lasciar le tue vestige*’; – who endured for my salvation to leave your footprints in Hell’ (*Paradiso* XXXI, 80-1). It was she who entreated Virgil, who wept to Virgil, for *l’ amico mio*. ‘*La tua magnificenza in me custodi--guard your magnificence in me*’ (*Paradiso* XXXI, 88)”. (Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 181)

Furthermore, when taking into consideration that Beatrice rebuking Dante is modelled on the heavenly Venus of *Aeneid* I scolding her unfaithful son Aeneas, Chiampi’s interpretation seems short-sighted. Beatrice is not indifferent to Dante nor are her actions only led by obedience and love for God alone, though that is the primary motivation. This correlation between *Purgatorio* XXX and the *Aeneid* suggests that Beatrice has maternal protective feelings for Dante (echoing God’s love for Dante). Though harsh on the surface, the inner core of imagery used shows her far deeper feelings for him.

⁸⁰ For this reason Dante’s reformulation in lines 49-51 of Orpheus’ lines in *Georgics* IV are simultaneously ironic and undercutting in that as Orpheus had lost Eurydice to death so had Dante lost Beatrice. However now though Dante unlike Orpheus has got her back, he is still unhappy.

⁸¹ For the more human side of Beatrice see Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove* pp. 133-4 and *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 181; for a comparison with *Vita Nuova* XVIII concerning Dante’s appreciation of other women see Gilbert, p. 141-6.

your son so often with disguises? Why may we not join hands and speak and hear the simple truth?" (I, 405-408). Venus, through continuing to disguise herself and therefore maintaining a distance, tries to deceive Aeneas, which Aeneas considers to be cruel. He desires her to reveal herself as a divine being and her relation to Aeneas her son. Instead, though continuing to protect him (409-412), she sends him to Dido whom she makes fall in love with him, thereby causing Aeneas to enter into an immoral destructive relationship resulting in Dido's suicide. This seems hardly to be seeking their immediate moral good, though Virgil shows Aeneas' experiences with Dido ultimately contributing to the overall purposes of Jupiter and Fate through his moral development enabling him to become the hero who founds Rome.

In contrast to the Venus of the *Aeneid*, Beatrice has exposed her identity directly, "I am Beatrice" (XXX, 73), and will progressively unveil the truth to Dante, gradually leading him to God until he sees himself, her and God clearly. Therefore rather than the love of Venus which is distant, hidden, and morally ambiguous, in Christianity God's love is revealed. The initial effect of Beatrice's question is not only the recognition by Dante the pilgrim that he is looking back due to his compassion for Virgil, but it also reduces him to his initial stage of desolation at the beginning of the *Commedia* prior to his encounter with Virgil. Like Socrates' use of *aporia* to call into question and deflate false knowledge, likewise Beatrice entirely deflates and humbles Dante to the point that he sees who he really is as he was prior to his climb when lost in the dark wood⁸² and becomes conscious of the extent to which he has fallen.⁸³ However simultaneously Dante the poet may also in part be critiquing and deflating the conception of the pagan goddess of love, pointing the reader to a truer kind of divinity gestured towards by Plato as we discussed earlier in this thesis, but which Dante now through Beatrice is going to reveal, God as *Caritas*.

Following this rebuke, Dante in his shame can no longer look at Beatrice. "My eyes fell down to the clear fount, but, seeing myself in it, I drew them back to the grass,

⁸² As Brandeis writes, "Her question ignores all that the climb through Purgatory has done to bring him out of the misery of the Dark Wood; it reflects him as he was when Virgil found him in the beast-ridden obscurity of the wood; and one gets the impression from the agony of his response that he now consciously sees this miserable image of himself for the first time. How did you deign to come here? she asks, and the question is bitter, but medicinal." (Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 112)

⁸³ Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 319.

so great shame weighed on my brow” (XXX, 76-78). As in Lacan, Dante knows himself through otherness, through the reflection in the other. Dante sees who he really is in Beatrice’s eyes. Dante cannot stand to look at his own image reflected, whether in Beatrice’s eyes or in the clear water of the stream, thereby drawing a connection between her eyes and the reflective mirror-like quality of the stream. Contrasting with the narcissism of Francesca, who facing Paolo her lover becomes absorbed in self-love, Dante faced with his beloved Beatrice experiences shame and self-hate⁸⁴, as he truly sees himself fully, recognizing his failing and the gravity of his sins. This mirror-like quality indicates again that Beatrice is likened to the Word of God as described in James 1: 23-25. Unlike Francesca’s narcissistic self-love with Paolo which is based on “false goods”, the temporal beauty of the body, physical and carnal pleasures (which lead away from God ending in their damnation), Dante’s relation with Beatrice functions like the Word of God calling Dante higher as it leads him here to contrition of heart and ultimately to repentance, *metanoia*, change of heart.⁸⁵ This indicates that their relationship is based on the pursuit of righteousness exemplified in Beatrice which leads to ultimate happiness, the contemplation and knowledge of God.

Unlike the reluctant, deceitful and therefore in one sense cruel mother of Aeneas, in the *Commedia* Dante’s maternal depiction of Beatrice is cruel because she tells him the truth since she loves him with Dante the poet’s understanding of God’s love. Thus despite these images of harshness, the depiction of Beatrice is not devoid of love.⁸⁶ Like Venus however, “postponing her beneficent effects”⁸⁷ and loving Dante like a child whom she disciplines (Hebrews 12: 5-11), her pity is as yet “*acerba*”, “unripe” as it is not yet ready to be revealed⁸⁸, since she has not yet brought him to a full recognition of sin

⁸⁴ Boyde, pp. 155-8.

⁸⁵ “As Lady Philosophy greets with stern rebuke the captive Boethius, in the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, I, Pr. ii, so the divine Beatrice bitterly chides Dante for his recreancy after the death of her mortal part.” (Grandgent, pp. 582-3)

⁸⁶ “Beatrice’s speech is a ‘sword’, well-aimed and sharp. She is a stern ‘admiral’ and a harsh ‘mother’, and ‘queen-like in bearing’. Yet images of love dilate all through her merciless putting of the case.” (Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 112)

⁸⁷ Shapero, *Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul*, pp. 130-1.

⁸⁸ This suggests that in lines 81-82, Beatrice seems harsh to Dante as “does the mother seem harsh to her child as she seemed to me, for savour of the stern pity tastes bitter”. Grandgent defines “*acerba*” as “unripe pity: pity that is not yet ready to reveal itself”. (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 587) Singleton elaborates on this by stating that “the pity of the mother is ‘*acerba*’ (‘unripe’), that is, it is not yet the moment for her to

and repentance. This suggests that Dante the pilgrim knows that, though painful at the present, she will ultimately have pity on him and lead him to God. Therefore more deeply considered this harshness is actually righteous indignation and sharp maternal concern for Dante's spiritual wellbeing. She as the Word of God is inspired by God, "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17). Like the action of the Word of God which is active (Hebrews 4: 31), and never goes out without effect (Isaiah 55:11), and is intended to help men (2 Timothy 3: 16-17) by humbling them and bringing them to their knees before God (Philippians 2:10), her comportment towards Dante brings him to his knees for his own good.

Through Beatrice, Dante has rewritten the roles in courtly love of which Dido in Medieval circles was viewed as exemplary once the tradition was established.⁸⁹ First, Beatrice's harshness suggests that Dante still holds to the feudal relationships of courtly love in which the *midons* dominated their lovers. Furthermore though still harsh and dictatorial, Beatrice, the *midons*, is beautiful and virtuous like an angel, as in Guinizelli's *donna angelica*. However though in this position of power she does not prevent the lover from reaching God⁹⁰ which would have fuelled Christianity's conflict with courtly love, the struggle between the knight's allegiance to *Mon Dieu et Ma Dame* which extended into the poetry of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. Instead the lady Beatrice, "the courtly lady whose power proceeded from a preordained proximity to the "lord" of the domain",⁹¹ through her harshness, authority, beauty and virtue is the means by which her lover Dante ultimately is led to God and reconciled with God. Thus the new *midons* acts like the Word of God as the means by which her lover is saved and reaches God. In this way, rather than an *aporia* in his path towards God, she functions as *poros*, a way to salvation whereby Dante reconciles courtly love and Christianity.

Thus *Purgatorio XXX* can be understood as critiquing the understanding of love of *Aeneid I*, in that the love attributed to and endorsed by heavenly Venus tends to degenerate into carnal desire, prefiguring the courtly tradition in which the virtuous ideals

reveal it, though the child knows it is there and will finally manifest itself". (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 746)

⁸⁹ Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 43.

⁹⁰ Brandeis, pp. 29-30.

⁹¹ Shapero, *Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul*, p. 112.

degenerate into carnal love. But Dante, following in the path of Virgil, in this section is not only critiquing Dido's love but is reworking Virgil's notion of heavenly Venus the goddess of beauty and love through Beatrice, making her lead towards God rather than to degeneration, thereby following the path of Aeneas which led to the founding of Rome, which is crucial in the *Commedia* as it became the centre of Christendom. In so doing Dante bridges the divide between Virgil and Christianity, making Virgil a precursor and prophet of Christianity. However simultaneously, through his reformulation of a new heavenly Venus embodied in Beatrice, Dante acknowledges the rift between the pagan and Christian worlds which causes Virgil to recede into Hell while Dante rises up to Heaven.⁹² Thus analogously to the way that he rejects some elements of courtly love while retaining others compatible with Christianity in order to bring courtly love to serve Christianity, so Dante reformulates the role of the heavenly Venus as portrayed in *Aeneid* I to make it compatible with Christianity, though he loses Virgil in the process.

Returning to lines 74-75, "How durst thou approach the mountain? Didst thou not know that here man is happy?", these questions serve the purpose of situating Beatrice as the figure of heavenly Venus, contrasting with Francesca representing earthly Venus. This contrast, as we will see, is mirrored by that in the Christian tradition between Eve, the mother of mankind who caused the Fall, and a new personal Eve, resembling a Christ-figure, *Sapientia* and the Word of God, who here participates in Dante's return to God. In both cases the primary difference between the earthly Venus and heavenly Venus (or the Eve-figure and the new Eve-figure) can be seen as relating to free will. As love/desire is determined by its object, whether carnal/pleasure/self-focused or spiritual/virtue/God-focused, clearly articulated through the difference between earthly and heavenly Venus, but also in Eve versus the new Eve-figure, so we see once again that Francesca could have been a Beatrice. This further suggests that earthly *eros* can be redirected to heavenly *eros* and heavenly *eros* can lead to Christian *caritas*, as indeed Augustine thought, which brings us to the subject of Dante's "conversion" which will be the focus of our next chapter.

⁹² This in turn causes him to critique himself, as Beatrice does the pilgrim, for his own sentimentality which suggests a lack of appreciation and true understanding of the highest good.

In the *Commedia*, Heavenly *eros* becomes Christian *caritas* through the intervention of God's grace, which is expressed through Beatrice. As we have thus far seen in *Purgatorio* XXX, through his paralleling of the rebuke in *Aeneid* I Dante has represented Beatrice as a new Heavenly Venus-figure while maintaining his use of Christian imagery, so that the pagan text is modified to render it compatible with Christianity. However mid-*Purgatorio* XXX, a shift occurs at the point in the narrative when in the *Aeneid* Aeneas is directed by Venus to go to the town of Dido. This suggests that Heavenly Venus' notion of Heavenly *eros* may degenerate to carnal love, which for Lewis is a critical problem of courtly love, the medieval antique exemplar of which is Dido.¹ The redeemed Beatrice rather than being deceptive like Venus, is shown to be a messenger of the Christian God from the beginning of XXX, and acts as the Word of God showing Dante the truth about himself, his sins. As the Word of God she shows Dante a fixed standard of righteousness before which he is broken, hence Beatrice's harshness. She enacts the coming of the law (Romans 7: 9) which convicts Dante of his sin so that he "dies". Thus far, though Beatrice is the instrument of God's grace she initially, like the law, convicts him of his sin and, though appearing to be without mercy, ends up being a true expression of God's mercy, since he must recognize his sin in order to change and be saved. In doing this she as the new Eve functions as a midwife, initiating and overseeing his full conversion to Christianity whereby Dante's Heavenly *eros* will be converted to *caritas*.

In *Purgatorio* XXXI, Dante undergoes a biblical conversion. Beatrice's role as instrument of Dante's salvation is to bring about in him contrition of heart, a repentant heart which confesses its sins in order to undergo the forgiveness of sins which, following the pattern of a biblical conversion, involves a baptism after which he receives the gift of the holy spirit. In contrast to Singleton's reading in terms of sacramental

¹ Lewis (*Allegory*, p. 43) notes that *Aeneid* IV is "sometimes mentioned in discussions of Courtly love. The story of Dido provides material that can be used, and was used, in courtly love poetry, *after* Courtly Love has come into existence: but until then, it will be read for what it is—a tragic exemplary story of ancient love".

penance,² a closer biblical reading of this passage offers perhaps a richer understanding of what Dante is doing. Dante seems to be focusing in this canto upon a passage which describes the first baptisms after the death of Jesus, on Pentecost which marks the beginning of the Church.

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the people heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2: 36-38)

After Peter’s testimony and accusation, the people present recognize individually that they have crucified Jesus (vs. 36), not necessarily by their presence and participation at the Crucifixion, but through their individual sins which caused/necessitated Jesus’ death (1Peter 2:24³). Upon recognizing their personal responsibility and guilt in Christ’s death, they are “cut to the heart” (vs. 37) and ask Peter what they can do to make amends. They want to take action to “die to sin and live for righteousness”. Peter replies that they must “repent” (vs. 38) (*metanoia*: Greek for “change of mind”, which clearly results in a change of actions; also see 2 Corinthians 7:10-11). Prior to repenting they would have to have understood what sin is (*peche, hamartia*, to miss the mark of perfection⁴) in order to confess their sins⁵ which is an integral part of repentance (Mark 1: 4-5; also see Matthew 3: 2, 6) as Dante so well understood, as they must know what they are repenting of in order to change their lives. Then they must be baptized (*baptidzo*: Greek for “immerse”), fully immersed. At the moment of baptism all their sins will be forgiven so that the wall of sin separating them and God (Isaiah 59:1-2) is dissolved (Romans 6: 3-7; Ephesians 2: 14) at which time they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through his imagery, Dante describes precisely this process of salvation.

² Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 767.

³ Isaiah 53: 5-6.

⁴ This incidentally shows Virgil’s comment in *Inferno* IV that the virtuous pagans “did not sin” (*Inferno* IV 34) incorrect as “all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory” (Romans 3:23) and “if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves...[and] make [God] out to be a liar” (1 John 1: 8-10).

⁵ 1 John 1: 9; James 5:16; These verses are addressed to people who are already Christians.

1. Convicted of Sin

Like Peter in Acts 2: 22-36, Beatrice initiates Dante's process of conversion by seeking to convict him of his sins, making him see his own guilt. She, representing the Word of God, tells him the truth and reveals God's standard, his divine law, so that Dante may see where he went wrong and how he can change.⁶ The intensity of this toughness/harshness indicative of the law, which convicts Dante of his sin becomes apparent in XXX when the angels entreat Beatrice to have mercy on Dante.⁷ However working in conjunction with the harshness of Beatrice, the compassion, pity, and mercy of the angels, expressing/reflecting the love and compassion of God, causes the softening⁸ and awakening in Dante's heart of a deep sense of contrition which leads to repentance.⁹

Endeavouring to bring about repentance in his heart,¹⁰ at this point she begins to

⁶ In contrast to Francesca's narcissistic self-pitying love, "Beatrice's harshness is the necessary counter to falseness, for her harshness (which is opposed to the Siren's sweet song) puts in relief the contours of the ethics of love she embodies" (Mazzotta, *Dante's Vision*, p. 151). Her love though in this context "hard" is actually true (Brandeis, *The Ladder of Vision*, p. 111).

⁷ Despite her "higher purpose" the angels, while praying for Dante simultaneously pray for Beatrice to have mercy upon him (See Psalm 31:1-8; cf. Musa, *Commentary*, p. 327 and Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 746-7) and have pity for him. Beatrice does not take pity on him for the reason that this would mean that she had compassion upon him, which implies a participation in his passion, putting herself in his place as we saw in *Inferno* V. Thus in contrast to Dante's immediate compassion for Francesca and Paolo which leads to his fall, Beatrice does not allow herself to put herself in his place until he is fully broken by his sins and repentant, at which point he has experienced a mind change and is on the right path, thereby avoiding any trace of sin. (She would have made a good guardian in Plato's *Republic*.)

⁸ Though dry-eyed when faced with Beatrice's harshness, the compassion of the angels through the sweet harmonies (Grandgent refers here to *Paradiso* I. 78, 82) melts Dante's heart into a flood of tears (Boyde, pp. 156-8) so that "the ice that was bound about my heart turned to breath and water and with anguish came forth from my breast by mouth and eyes" (XXX, 85-90; See Musa, *Commentary*, p. 328; Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 587 refers to Lucan, *Phars.* IX, 528-32, 538-39 and Psalm 68: 2). This is a palpable expression of the outpouring of grief which realistically describes sorrow, imagistically using all phases in the water cycle (Boyde, pp. 156-8).

⁹ Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 588.

¹⁰ "*Pur ferma*" (100) unmoved, in her lack of pity, Beatrice addresses the angels, "the pitiful spirits" (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 588; Singleton in *Commentary*, p. 750 refers to *Convivio* II, iv, 2), as those who are eternally present before God (XXX, 103-5). Given then that they see everything, though she addresses them she speaks for Dante's benefit, "that he should hear me who weeps yonder, so that sin and sorrow may be of one measure" (XXX, 107-9), that his sadness for his sins be equal to the amount and severity of his sins committed, so that in being deeply and proportionately grieved concerning every sin he has committed, he may have a "Godly sorrow" (see 2 Corinthians 7: 9-11; Also see Matthew 5:3-4). This assumes the existence of a hierarchy of sins which considering Romans 3:23 and 6:23 is not biblical though firmly established in medieval Christian doctrine.

indicate in what way Dante sinned. She explains how he has wasted his good potential.¹¹ Not only was he born with great natural gifts/ “advantages” due to the arrangement of the stars at his birth (*Convivio* IV, xxi, 7 and Grandgent, p. 588), a potential which he applied to negative sinful uses, but also he was allotted by Heaven a special gift of God’s grace, which includes the presence and influence of Beatrice herself during his youth (Sayers *Commentary*, line 115), “Beatrice” meaning a woman who “confers blessedness....blessed (*benedetta, beata*)” see *Vita Nuova* 23, 29 (Gilbert, p. 139); “Never did nature or art set before thee beauty so great as the fair members in which I was enclosed” (XXXI, 49-51).¹² This second kind of grace “*ne la sua Vita Nuova*” (in his young life, XXX, 116, referring to the “*Vita Nuova*”) brought about a rebirth through his love for Beatrice¹³ through pointing him towards God.¹⁴ However when she died, when she “changed life” from temporal flesh to eternal spirit¹⁵ thereby increasing in “beauty and virtue”, she became “less dear to him and less welcome and he bent his steps in a way not true following after false images of good which fulfil no promise” (XXX, 127-132). Dante did not recognize this “improvement” as he was too concentrated upon the things he could see,¹⁶ things of the flesh as opposed to those of the spirit (cf. Augustine,

¹¹ Uneven distribution of grace (see Thomas Aquinas, *De virtutibus cardinalibus* a. 2, ad 1 in *Basic Writings*) is explained by the stars in *Convivio*, IV, xxi, 7, and as incomprehensible for man (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 750 and Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 588).

¹² Resembling Song of Songs 2:2, Beatrice was the most beautiful creature whether in nature or art that ever Dante encountered, a “miracle” performed by God. She exemplified the *donna angelica* of Guinizzelli causing utter delight in her lover referring back to the *joie* of courtly love (Symonds, “The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love”, p. 77) and perhaps resembling a mystical ecstasy. Though *piacer* (line 49) means both beauty and pleasure/delight, Singleton believes that in this context Dante is speaking about Beatrice’s beauty in that it outshines everything else in creation for him.

Here, as before, *piacer* is ambiguous. Line 50 speaks of a “‘beauty’ or perhaps a ‘delight,’ but the meaning ‘beauty’ seems predominant, as Beatrice’s ‘*piacer*’ is said to surpass any created by nature or by art. [Furthermore] ‘*piacer*,’ two verses later, continues with the meaning ‘beauty’ as the predominant sense” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 764).

¹³ Though line 116 may be translated in his “new life”, it means “possibly merely ‘his early life’... In view of the title of the *Vita Nuova*, Beatrice probably means that ‘new life’ on which he entered when, through her means, he first knew himself to be in a state of grace” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 313).

¹⁴ In line 123 this journey’s description as *dritta parte volto* “turned toward God” is comparable to *Inf.* I, 3: “*la diritta via*” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 752).

¹⁵ What Dante in the *Convivio* (IV, xxiv, 2) calls “*mutai vita*,” changed life (Sinclair, p. 125). “*Mutai*” (XXX, 125) suggests the change from “the temporal for the eternal.” (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 589) or as Sayers writes “life for life exchanged: exchanged this life for the life of eternity” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 314).

¹⁶ “According to the codifications of courtly love and the practice of the Stilnovists, [love] is tied to the eyes. He who is blind, we are told, cannot love. We also know that love, though itself blindfolded, opens the lover’s eyes. What we are probably less familiar with is the insight that was overtly formulated by no less an intellectualist than St. Thomas Aquinas. Among all the senses, sight is the one the lover values

Confessions 10:38) and turned away on the wrong path (*Inferno* 1:3) to pursue false images of the good rather than the Good itself, which would be reached through the mediation of Beatrice.¹⁷ These false images of the good “fulfill no promise,” *che nulla promession rendono intera* (XXX, 132),¹⁸ in that while they promise a true eternal perfection, they are actually temporal and false, hence imperfect and in this deceitful nature prove treacherous.¹⁹

So far Dante’s specific sins remain ambiguous and undefined, but in *Purgatorio* XXXI lines 58-60, Beatrice returns to the matter: “No young girl or other vanity of such brief worth should have bent thy wings downward to await more shots.” While *pargoletta* means “young maid” suggesting an actual girl or temptation away from an old fidelity/commitment, the youth of *pargoletta* is connected to “fledgling” (*augelletto*, line 61) which stresses the youth and immaturity of Dante which, as Singleton notes, is later emphasized by Beatrice’s comment concerning Dante’s beard (line 75), suggesting that though he is a man he is behaving childish.²⁰ Yet this does not clarify the nature of the sin concerning the *pargoletta* which is subject to considerable debate among commentators. Grandgent maintains that the *pargoletta* was an actual woman,²¹ perhaps

most: ‘*ubi amor ibi oculus*’. More than anything else—as even the story of Psyche spying *Eros* asleep reminds us—he who loves wants to see the beloved. Seeing is privileged because it is never partitioned, but, on the contrary, it affords direct, immediate Perception of the whole.” (Mazzotta, *Dante’s Vision*, “The Dream of the Siren”, pp. 152-3) Once Dante loses sight of Beatrice he loses his devotion, his love and his way. Beatrice’s message to him is not to focus upon the outer beauty which fades but to cherish the inner beauty and virtue which last eternally.

¹⁷ Boethius uses the phrase “*imagines veri boni*” (the images of the true good) in *Cons.*, III, Pr. ix. Cf. *Purg.* XVI, 91 (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 589). Also “compare the dream of the *antica strega*, *Purg.* XIX, 7-24” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 753).

¹⁸ Boethius, III, viii, II. 1-3, 31-35.

¹⁹ In *Convivio* IV, xii, 2-4, Dante states: “And here be it known that defective things may harbour their defects in such fashion that they appear not at first sight, the imperfection hiding under a pretext of perfection...And those things which at first conceal their defects are the most dangerous; because, in many cases, we cannot be on our guard against them... The false traitresses ever promise to make him who gathers them full of satisfaction ... and with this promise they lead the human will to the vice of avarice.” (cited by Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 753-4) Such, in fact, was the significance of all the physical defects of the woman in the dream of *Purgatorio*, XIX. See also Smarr, “Poets of Love and Exile”, p. 146.

²⁰ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 337.

²¹ Also see Musa, *Commentary*, p. 328; Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 752-3; Moore, “The Reproaches of Beatrice”, Third Series, p. 230. Grandgent points firstly to “Dante’s second dream of a siren (*Purgatorio* XIX, 19) [which] represented the sins of the flesh”. Secondly to the fact that the angels sing Psalm 51 which David wrote after committing adultery with Bathsheba among other things. Thirdly to the emphasis on *piacer* as physical beauty implying physical desire for which the other poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* are being purged on the mount of Purgatory. And fourthly to Dante’s identification of Francesca’s notion of love in *Inferno* V which echoes his early poetry, explaining why at the end of Canto V he faints in that he recognizes himself in her and also recognizes that he has been deceived. Shapero (*Woman, Earthly and*

the *donna gentile* who pitied him after the death of Beatrice, an infatuation of which he was ashamed (*Vita Nuova*, XXXVII-XXXIX) and about which he was defensive (*Convivio*, I, ii, 15-17), covering it up through naming her Lady Philosophy in the *Convivio* (II, xii) until his confession in the *Commedia*.²² Others have considered this a moral lapse and/or intellectual offence,²³ the forsaking of Theology for Philosophy, as in the case of Pietro,²⁴ Nardi,²⁵ Moore,²⁶ and Thompson,²⁷ though as Grandgent points out this seems a transition for which there is no clear evidence.²⁸ However as we saw in the last chapter, whether involving a woman or a moral/intellectual lapse or both, Dante's sin can be seen as his prioritization of and devotion to deceptive lesser forms of goodness above the greatest good which indicates an inappropriate "ordering of love",²⁹ as we saw in our discussion of *Purgatorio* XXX 71-6.

As a result of turning away from Beatrice, and therefore from the path leading to God, though Beatrice tried to elicit his attention without success,³⁰ "he fell so low that all

Divine, p. 80) believes the *pargoletta* is either a woman or a symbol of femininity of which the pilgrim must be purged.

²² Musa, *Commentary*, p. 328; Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 592, Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 764.

²³ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 337.

²⁴ Pietro viewed "Beatrice allegorically as Theology, which he abandoned to follow his little maid symbolizing poetry and worldly knowledge, philosophy". (See Pietro, *On Cantos* 30, 31 in Gilbert, pp. 141-6; cf. Augustine's discussion of the *Aeneid* in the *Confessions* and Plato's view of the poet in the *Republic*.)

²⁵ Nardi ("*Filosofia dell'Amore*", p. 63) seems to believe that Dante forsook Beatrice for philosophy but realizing her to be a cold, unloving mistress returned to Beatrice and theology.

²⁶ For Moore, Dante's love for God and his devotion to theology and religion which had cooled because of the death of Beatrice was substituted with philosophy, though he never rejected theology completely. (Moore, "The Reproaches of Beatrice", Third Series, pp. 238, 248-9; see also Sinclair, pp. 411-12).

²⁷ Thompson considers that the *pargoletta* represents an abortive philosophical voyage leading to death. "The *Convivio* is unfinished because it represented a *via non vera* that led towards spiritual shipwreck: Philosophy cannot do what Boethius' lady had claimed, and Dante must make a different journey—the Augustinian journey of the self." (Thompson, *Dante's Epic Journeys*, pp. 66-71)

²⁸ According to Grandgent (p. 592) "his admiration [for philosophy] never waned; throughout the *Commedia*, as in the *Convivio*, she is the handmaid of religion and, though not omniscient, the guide to revelation". Clearly Dante has made a decisive turn towards an Augustinian path but this turn is informed by philosophy.

²⁹ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 120-121. Beatrice is charging Dante with sinning against God, echoing Psalm 51:4, through idolatry (Galatians 5: 20), putting things before God, or in this case the pursuit of God through the mediation of Beatrice, thus resulting in a lowering of Dante's moral standards (see Moore, "The Reproaches of Beatrice", Third Series, p. 249).

³⁰ "Nor did it avail me to gain inspirations from him with which both in dream and in other ways I called him back, so little did he heed them." (See *Vita Nuova*, XXXIX, 1-3; XLI, 10-13; and the "*mirabile visione*" ("wondrous vision") of XLII, 1; Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 589.) She tried to attract his attention through visions and unrecorded dreams (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 754) echoing Acts 2: 17 (and Joel 2: 28-32), which she gained through imploring God on his behalf, indicating her love for him. However he did not heed the dreams and visions "so little did it matter to him". (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 754)

means for his salvation now came short except to show him the lost people” (XXX, 136-138). Given the level of Dante’s degradation,³¹ Dante’s descent into Hell was necessary, the only possibility open to him, a point made by Virgil in *Purg.* I, 62-63 (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 755) when he said to Cato “there was no other way but this on which I have set out.” Therefore, out of necessity to save his soul Beatrice journeyed to the gate of the dead (*Inferno* II, 52) and cried for him both to God and to Virgil (*Inferno* II, 116³²; also see *Purg.* XXVII, 137) which reflects her concern for him and his salvation.³³

2. The Confession

According to XXX, 142-145, in obedience to God’s highest decree³⁴, Beatrice must make Dante face and confess his sins which separate him from God³⁵ and weep in deep regret (2 Corinth 7: 9-11) so that his heart will be contrite (Psalm 51:17) and may change deeply within. Following her explanation, she turns again to Dante and scolds

³¹ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 329.

³² Shapero, *Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul*, pp. 130-131.

³³ With regard to Beatrice’s feelings for Dante, Chiampi (pp. 51-53) incorrectly believes that Beatrice only really cries from Dante’s violation of God’s law. However Chiampi seems not to have noted, first that Dante correlates Beatrice’s relation to Dante with Venus’ relation to Aeneas in *Aeneid* I, which is that of a mother to a son indicating maternal concern and protection as we saw in the last chapter. And, second, Chiampi seems not to have fully recognized the role of Beatrice as the expression of grace for Dante. In contrast to Chiampi’s image of an iron clad Beatrice who is entirely indifferent to Dante, Charles Williams holds that Beatrice is motivated by both Divine and personal love for Dante to descend into Hell to save him. “It is thus the passionate and directed love of Beatrice which begins and sustains the *Comedy* - she of whom we know nothing except that she could be believed to do so, nothing but that she is the great archetype in poetry of all the *shes*, and yet they are themselves and not she, nothing but that there was a girl who was that as she walked and chattered and laughed in Florence...It is so that she laughs and teases and chatters and explains in Heaven, only with a greatness about her, the greatness of Heavenly fate, and the customs and metaphysics of the redeemed City. It is through her that energy comes, and as by her the New Life had once been written and the poetry of Dante had begun, so now in the newer life it is she who moves Virgil and poetry to initiate the Return.” (Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove*, p. 135) Though Williams sadly exaggerates the actual romantic character of Beatrice, Beatrice’s true affection for Dante, already noted through her connection with the Venus of the *Aeneid*, is evident in Christian imagery through her role as the messenger of God bringing God’s grace, and in that she acts as his attentive guide through *Paradiso*. Nonetheless though more subtle than Williams suggests, her personal feeling is indicated at the end of *Paradiso* (XXXI, 91-3) when Beatrice gazes back at Dante. (See the Italian or the Singleton translation, as the Sinclair translation seems misleading concerning these specific lines.)

³⁴ *Fato di Dio* means “Decree of God, which is what the pagan concept of fate became in Christian doctrine, See Augustine, *De civ. Dei* V, i-ix, 4; Boethius, *Consol. Philos.* IV, vi, ll. 1-86; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* I, q. 116, a. 2 and a. 4” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 755).

³⁵ Addressing him as “O thou that art on that side of the sacred river,”(XXXI, 1) indicates that he has not crossed Lethe nor has he “crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24) meaning that he is still separated from God (Isaiah 59: 1-2) still walking in darkness (1John 1: 5-6).

him;³⁶ Beatrice as the Word of God (Hebrews 4: 12-13) speaks as “turning against [him] the point of her speech which even with the edge had seemed sharp to [him]” (XXXI, 2-3) and insists, “Say, say if this is true; to such an accusation thy confession must needs be joined” (XXXI, 5-6). Having addressed him directly by name (Purg. XXX, 55), then indicating his guilt to the angels and indirectly to him which “‘wounded’ [the pilgrim] only with the ‘blade’ [she now]...has turned the ‘sword point’ on him,” (Musa, *Commentary*) to attack him directly and cut him with her “double-edged” words (Hebrews 4:12) in order to bring about his own personal confession which is necessary for him to be reconciled with God (1John 1: 9-10).³⁷

With this encouragement, “confusion and fear mingled together drove forth from my mouth a [*Si*] Yes such that to hear it there was need of sight” (XXXI, 13-15). Still resembling the shy Dante of the *Vita Nuova* the “*si*” seen only through the movement of the lips is “completely inaudible”.³⁸ This weakness of speech Dante compares to a “cross-bow [which when] shot with too great strain breaks the cord and bow and the shaft touches the mark with less force, so I broke down under that heavy charge, pouring forth tears and sighs, and my voice failed in its passage” (XXXI, 16-21). Compared to a cross-bow cranked too far back³⁹ Dante breaks under the tension, resulting in an “[eruption] in a storm of sighs and tears” (Boyde, pp. 156-8), recalling his melting into tears in XXX, 85-99. Appropriately “breaking” means *contritio*⁴⁰, so the breaking of the bow corresponds to the breaking of the heart.⁴¹ Echoing the powerlessness resulting from deep

³⁶ Boyde, p. 155.

³⁷ Confession is an integral part of repentance. If one does not understand how one has sinned, what sin is, and acknowledge one’s guilt, it is impossible to change, repent, *metanoein*. Examples of pre-Christian confession— Leviticus 26: 40-2, Psalm 38: 18, Matt 3: 6.

³⁸ Boyde, pp. 156-8.

³⁹ “Porena notes that the crossbow could be cranked up mechanically to a tension far greater than that possible with the ordinary hand-drawn bow.” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 757)

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III, suppl. I writes, “As stated in Ecclus. X. 15, pride is the beginning of all sin, because thereby man clings to his own judgment, and strays from the Divine commandments. Consequently that which destroys sin must needs make man give up his own judgment ... And since, for the remission of sin, it is necessary that man should put aside entirely his attachment to sin, which implies a certain state of continuity and solidity in his mind, therefore it is that the act through which sin is cast aside is called contrition metaphorically. . . . Another definition is given by Isidore (*De Sum. Bono*, ii, 12) as follows: Contrition is a tearful sorrow and humility of mind, arising from remembrance of sin and fear of the Judgment. Here we have an allusion to the derivation of the word, when it is said that it is humility of the mind, because just as pride makes the mind rigid, so is a man humbled, when contrition leads him to give up his mind.” (Singleton, *Commentary*, pp. 758-9)

⁴¹ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 758.

sorrow expressed in the *Aeneid*⁴², with a "voice about to fail" (XXXI, 21) his voice like a "shaft" hits its target "with diminished force". Due to the accuracy of her blow, the truth of her accusations which pierce his heart, he is left powerless, confessing as if pouring out "*insieme parole e sangue*" like Pier della Vigna in *Inferno* XIII, 43-44 ("so from the broken splinter came forth words and blood together")⁴³.

Dante confesses,⁴⁴ "Present things⁴⁵ with their false pleasure turned my steps as soon as your face [*vostro viso*] was hid" (XXXI, 34-36). In line 35, "*col falso lor piacer*", there remains some ambiguity concerning *piacer*.⁴⁶ While referring to "false pleasures" it also means "false beauty" which opposes the true beauty of Beatrice and the *piacer* of Beatrice of line 50. This false *piacer* furthermore resembles the use of *piacer* by Paolo and Francesca in *Inferno* V. Francesca says "*Amor..mi prese del constui piacer sì forte*" ("Love...seized me so strongly with his charms"; *Inferno* V, 104). As we saw in "Falling for Francesca", for Francesca false pleasures are related to false beauty, both of which are temporal and carnal. Likewise the false pleasures of *Purgatorio* XXX, 35-36 from the moment of her death turned Dante aside from pursuing the truer spiritual beauty of Beatrice which leads to the ultimate pleasure and beauty of God.⁴⁷ This confirms Dante's great compassion and weakness for Francesca are derived from their mutual weakness,

⁴² This image of powerlessness through sorrow echoes *Aeneid* XI, 150-151: "He clings to him weeping and moaning, and scarce from sorrow at the last does his speech find open way" (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 594). Virgil departed lives on through Dante the pilgrim as if Virgil like liquid runs through his veins, informing the way he reflects upon and understands the universe.

⁴³ For discussions concerning emotional tension within the soul see *Phaedrus* 253d-254e and *Republic* Books 3 and 4 as well as within the Christian tradition Romans 7 and Galatians 5.

⁴⁴ Boyde, pp. 156-8.

⁴⁵ "*Le presenti cose*, 'present things' refer to things that were before Dante's eyes and his mind's eye after Beatrice's death, as her face no longer was. '*Presenti*' is thus opposed to Beatrice's absent beauty, which once led toward God (vss. 23.24)." (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 761)

⁴⁶ "*Piacere* in Dante's usage lends itself to this ambiguity (cf. *Inf.* V, 104; *Purg.* XVIII, 21 and 27). The '*piacer*' of present things anticipates and opposes Beatrice's '*piacer*' (vs. 50), where again the ambiguity of the term continues" (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 762).

⁴⁷ Beatrice then mentions Dante's "desires for me which were leading thee in love of the good beyond which there is nothing to be longed for" (XXXI, 22-24). The good, *bene*, which is the end of desire is God. "This '*bene*' is, by definition, God, since only in Him can our desires and our love find rest and so have no need to aspire further." (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 760) Singleton's reading seems influenced by Augustine's *Confessions* I, 1 and XIII, 10. Virtuous love of the creation (in that it is directed at an object of virtue) leads to love of the Creator (see *Confessions* X, 9; also Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 319) Thus the love of Dante for Beatrice, made in the image of God, leads him beyond her to the ultimate good which is God. In this way Dante is reworking courtly love and thereby rewriting Guinizelli and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* to serve Christian ends. This also explains the repeated analogy between Christ and Beatrice. Christ the Logos of God is reflected in "beloved" Beatrice, God's creation as the particularized means by which Dante's salvation and reconciliation with God is brought about.

love of false temporal carnal forms of beauty and pleasures⁴⁸.

3. Acknowledgement of Confession and Instruction in Repentance

As God is the omniscient judge before whom we must give an account (Hebrews 4:13), Dante cannot fool God. If he had tried to deceive Beatrice and therefore God, his sin would have remained (1John 1:8-10; also see John 9:41). Through admitting that he has sinned/confessing his sins, God forgives him and he is purified of all unrighteousness.⁴⁹

Beatrice then explains how Dante may “now bear the shame of thy wandering and another time, hearing the Sirens, be stronger” (XXXI, 44-45) and avoid making the same mistakes in the future.⁵⁰ Dante’s interaction with Beatrice will make him self-aware, possess self-knowledge “waking him up” through unveiling the Siren’s false promises,⁵¹ so that he may “prove [his] repentance by [his] deeds” (Acts 26: 20). To this end he must stop weeping and listen⁵² to avoid being controlled by his emotion thereby falling into self-pity.⁵³ As her fair members “crumbled in dust [so that]...the highest beauty [failed him in] death, what mortal thing should then have drawn [him] into desire for it?”

⁴⁸ Augustine’s *Confessions* 3:1; also see *Confessions* 4:10 concerning physical beauty and pleasure.

⁴⁹ “But when from a man’s own cheek breaks forth condemnation of his sin, in our court the wheel turns back against the edge” (XXXI, 42). When a man in confessing blushes (or his blush may be a confession; Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 595), he is ashamed of and condemns himself for his sin. In contrast to earthly courts (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 336) at this moment in Heaven, “the grindstone turns back against the edge’: the sword of justice is blunted... tempered with mercy” (Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 595). Drawing upon the image of the sword wound (cf. XXXI, 3-4 and XXX, 56-57), as the sword is made blunt by the grindstone, so the sword of God’s justice is made blunt by God’s mercy, the image echoing Isaiah 2:4 in which an instrument of war and death is made into a instrument of cultivation, life and peace.

⁵⁰ Mazzotta, *Dante’s Vision*, “The Dream of the Siren,” p. 150.

⁵¹ Mazzotta, *Dante’s Vision*, “The Dream of the Siren,” p. 150.

⁵² To this end she says “*pon giu il seme del piangere, ed ascolta*”, “lay aside the sowing of tears and hearken”(Sinclair) indicating that he is so overcome with sorrow and emotion that he cannot rationally focus upon what she says, or according to Musa, “put down the seeds of crying and listen”. However according to Psalm 126: 5; “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy” (NIV), which indicates that he is truly grieved over his sins, but that this sorrow will lead to joy. Now, however, he must stop being controlled by his emotions which could at this point lead to worldly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10), and listen to her as opposed to the Sirens.

⁵³ This points to a problem with the Medieval Christian judgment that passion/emotion dominating reason is sin. While the sin in *lussuria* is passion dominating reason, the moment of ultimate sorrow and regret is likewise reason dominated by the passion/emotion of sorrow. As the first is sin and the latter is positive and absolutely necessary for salvation, there appears to be a problem with the Medieval view of *lussuria* which Dante subscribes to, particularly as the Christian God is a God of compassion (Exodus 34: 6) and grace (John 1: 14, 16).

(XXXI, 49-57) Rather than being fixated upon the physical beauty of Beatrice, thereby losing his way at her death, he should have concluded from her death⁵⁴ that, as the physical realm is transitory and false, he henceforth should have devoted himself to and followed Beatrice to God.⁵⁵

Up to this point we have watched Beatrice rebuke Dante for his sins until his heart is contrite and repentant upon which she demands a confession. Thus with a broken heart he confesses after which she proceeds to admonish him and instruct him as to what he ought to have done faced with her death so that he may prove his repentance by his deeds. This takes us through recognition of error and confession of error. Then to make the recognition complete she tells him to look into her eyes⁵⁶ which reflect the knowledge of God, and likewise act as a reflection of God, as a means to drive home his error and to begin the unveiling of the beauty of God, which will act as a lure to lead Dante to Heaven.

Though at the end of *Paradiso*, Dante will look up at Beatrice “exalted” beneath the Virgin Mary and Eve echoing Acts 2: 33⁵⁷, here looking up, Dante focuses in upon Beatrice who “turned towards the beast which is one sole person in two natures. Beneath her veil and beyond the stream, she seemed to me to surpass her former self more than she surpassed the others here when she was with us” (XXXI, 80-84).⁵⁸ Immediately Dante recognizes the truth in what Beatrice has said, indeed how more beautiful and virtuous she has become since her “*vita mutai*”, and therefore how much more loveable and more deserving of love.⁵⁹ Though according to the *Vita Nuova* before her death, “Beatrice was not only a woman but one of the most beautiful angels of Heaven” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 338) now Beatrice’s beauty surpasses the conception of the *donna*

⁵⁴ Mazzotta, *Dante’s Vision*, “The Dream of the Siren”, p. 150.

⁵⁵ Beatrice’s correction may be pointing towards Augustine’s response to the death of his friend (see *Confessions* 4:4) which developed a deep awareness of the “transitoriness of all things set against the undying beauty of God” (Watson, *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God*, p. 96; see *Confessions* 4, 10). Augustine thereby recognized the temporality of the physical world and so began a pursuit of the eternal good, God. Augustine responded to the death of his friend in precisely the way Beatrice wished and thought Dante should have responded to her death. (Also see Barolini, “Dante and the Lyric Past”, p. 24.)

⁵⁶ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 765.

⁵⁷ This is a moment when Dante the poet has been seen as moving towards heresy.

⁵⁸ The two natures of the beast “who in two natures is one single being,” symbolize the “two natures of Christ: divine and human” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 338). They are formulated imagistically as “literally, part eagle and part lion” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 766).

⁵⁹ Mazzotta, *Dante’s Vision*, p. 151.

angelica of Guinizelli and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* which influenced the *Vita Nuova*, through the augmentation of her already angelic beauty through her relation with Christ. This mixture of divine and human beauty in Beatrice continues the symbolism of the dual nature of Christ, so that she represents the image of God gazing towards God therefore leading the pilgrim towards God. This image of the beautified Beatrice turned towards the Griffin therefore eliminates the opposition between *ma Dame et mon Dieu*, inherited from the tradition of courtly love, reconciling the courtly love tradition and Christianity. This fact for Dante the poet makes her infinitely more beautiful, because she becomes the solution to the problem, the point where the different traditions come together and are renegotiated, reconciled and this reconciliation is affirmed empowering her as a *poros* figure.⁶⁰

4. Conversion by Immersion

Upon this recognition of her increase in beauty, rather than being the source of “unalloyed delight”⁶¹, “the nettle of remorse so stung [Dante] there that of all other things that which had most bent [him] to the love of it became for [him] the most hateful; such self-conviction bit [him] at the heart” (XXXI, 85-90). At the sight of Beatrice he recognizes the fullness of his betrayal in turning away from both her and God to follow worldly “false pleasures”. The word “*penter*” or nettles may perhaps suggest the idea of thorns, referring to Christ’s crown of thorns worn by Jesus during the crucifixion (Mark 15: 17-18), and/or be suggestive of the cutting by nail when he was crucified. This allusion to the piercing of Christ at the crucifixion is made or strengthened by the next line 88, “self-conviction bit me at the heart” (*Tanta riconoscenza il cor mi morse*) in that it seems to refer to the moment in Acts 2: 36-7 when those listening at Pentecost to Peter were “cut to the heart” upon recognizing that they were personally responsible for the death of Christ due to their sins. This suggests that Dante the pilgrim recognizes the relationship between the cross and his sins, that Christ died for his sins (1Peter 2:24) and that he through his sin crucified Christ (Acts 2:36). At this point “all other things that

⁶⁰ As a Christ-figure this echoes Acts 2: 28: “You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence”.

⁶¹ Boyde, pp. 156-8.

which had most bent me to the love of it became for me the most hateful” (XXXI, 86-7), recalling Paul’s description of his change of heart in Philippians 3:7-8: “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ”.⁶²

As a result of this recognition, Dante “fell overcome and what [he] became then she knows who was the cause of it” (XXXI, 89-90); Dante swooned and passed out having recognized the full extent of his sin.⁶³ However this swooning and ultimately finding himself in the river of Lethe in which he in turn is baptized/immersed (again following Peter’s instructions in Acts 2: 38), is participating in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has been crucified with Christ in recognizing and being cut by his sins (Romans 6:6; the rebuke leading to the *penter* nettles, thorns, nails—Acts 2: 37) has died to his sins (Romans 6:7; 1Peter 2: 24) dramatized by his swooning to be raised to a “new life” (Romans 6:4), a true *Vita Nuova*.

This fainting recalls Dante’s fainting in *Inferno* Canto V. However, once again this correlation has a far deeper meaning. When Dante swoons in *Inferno* V, he symbolically dies because through his compassion he participates in the passion of Paolo and Francesca and therefore dies in sin (Ephesians 2:1), associating him with Hell. This distinguishes Francesca as aporetic—without a way or passage, unable to find a way out of the Hell of her mind as she is so tangled with sin, denying all guilt both morally and socially, refusing to repent of it, but instead denies her own responsibility while shifting the blame to everyone else for her fate. Here Dante’s fainting is out of repentance, a dying to sin and participating in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Dante in contrast with Francesca accepts responsibility for his sins and is so cut by his guilt that he cries, sweats, is overcome and distraught and finally faints, showing his full recognition of guilt and desire to repent. The weakness in Dante’s description biblically is that at no point does Dante articulate a decision to live differently, repentance meaning “mind change” (*metanoia*), but is swept away in a tide of emotion/passion and poetry which, as we saw in *Inferno* V with Francesca, is Dante’s basic problem/issue. In this context we see that his repentance opens the passage, made possible by Jesus’ death and sacrifice, allowing Dante to escape the *aporia* of Francesca while showing Jesus to be the true

⁶² See also Luke 14: 26 and Matthew 10: 37-8.

⁶³ Grandgent, *Commentary*, p. 597; Musa, *Commentary*, p. 338.

Poros (or Resource) or “the Way” to salvation (John 14:6) the messenger of whom is Beatrice. Therefore Dante, rather than swooning as with Francesca participating in her death and damnation, here faints out of horror over his sin, out of repentance, dying to his sin into which he was lured by the sirens, which as with godly sorrow leads to life and salvation (2 Corinthians 7: 10). While *Inferno* V ends with Dante’s swoon into death, in *Purgatorio* XXXI, following the swoon into baptism, the canto continues describing his rising to a new life through being crowned with the holy Spirit and being reunited with Beatrice, who then leads him to God.

Having been drawn across the river by Matilda⁶⁴ who is walking on the water, resembling Christ walking on the water⁶⁵ (XXXI, 91-96), when Dante had almost reached “the blessed shore⁶⁶, [he] heard ‘*Asperges me*’... sweetly sung”, *Asperges me*, borrowed from Psalm 51:7, meaning “Cleanse me of sin”.⁶⁷ As the “*figura Christi*, cleansing man of his sins” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 339) Matilda “the fair lady opened her arms, clasped my head and plunged me under, where I must swallow the water” (XXXI, 100-103). She fully immerses him in the waters of baptism completing his biblical path according to Acts 2:38 towards the forgiveness of his sins,⁶⁸ and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, as we

⁶⁴ “Matilda seems to be assigned the task of administering the waters of Lethe and Eunoe to all those souls who reach the Earthly Paradise. That she does not perform the task only for the Pilgrim will be demonstrated in *Purgatorio* XXXIII, 134-35, when she invites Statius, too, to drink from the waters of Eunoe.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 339)

⁶⁵ Matthew 14:25; incidentally Peter like Dante sinks and must be held onto, Matthew 14: 30-31.

⁶⁶ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 769.

⁶⁷ “Cleanse me of sin with hyssop, that I may be purified; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” This extraordinary psalm is a psalm of deep repentance written after Nathan confronted David for committing adultery with Bathsheba, getting her pregnant and killing her husband. This represents the moment when David was at his worst spiritually having done the most grievous sins of his lifetime. It also represents David at his best as he is fully broken before God, fully repentant and desperate for God’s forgiveness. For these reasons it is an appropriate psalm for the angels to sing. Firstly, because as David, a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) had fallen into sin so Dante, a man blessed by God both in birth and grace, has likewise done. Secondly, like David, Dante was at his lowest point but also most humble point before God, and fully repentant. And lastly, this may also suggest that as the psalm was written after David slept with Bathsheba, got her pregnant and murdered her husband, Dante’s sins are predominantly sins of the flesh, lust.

⁶⁸ There is an internal debate between the traditions around baptism which Dante practised and the scriptures which he accepted from the Bible concerning baptism. Singleton writes, “Dante’s crossing of Lethe, immersed therein, is therefore the absolution which completes the act of penance as well as the pattern of justification....The immersion [is]... a kind of baptism (but not an actual baptism, for the sacrament of baptism is not to be repeated).” According to the traditions of the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, baptism “absolves from the guilt of original sin, penance from that of personal sin” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 770). Dante believed in infant baptism; in *Inferno* IV: 28-35 “little children” experienced “grief without torments” because “they have not baptism”. However, Dante marks out the “pattern of justification” using scripture by which all sins are forgiven through baptism which demands a

shall soon see, which is the beginning of his new life as he is “born of water and spirit”(John 3:3-5). During this baptism, Dante drank from the river Lethe following the pagan belief that the soul after death drinks from Lethe which wipes it clean through erasing memory of the past.⁶⁹ Therefore through both Christian and pagan imagery, the pagan always subordinate to the Christian, the poet enacts the purification of the soul of Dante the pilgrim and his rebirth.

After his immersion and drink, the purification of his soul and intellect/mind, she “led me bathed [cleansed] into the dance of the four fair ones, and each covered me with her arms” (XXXI, 103-5). The “fair ones” are Beatrice’s handmaids, the four infused cardinal virtues; Fortitude, Justice, Prudence and Temperance (see Musa, *Commentary*, p. 340) who in covering him with their arms form a crown of virtue over him.⁷⁰

Given the reading thus far of Acts 2: 36-9, these infused virtues can be interpreted as being the “gift of the Holy Spirit”. Prophesying the coming and reign of Christ, in Isaiah 61: 1-3, Isaiah inspired by “the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord preaches good news...the year of the Lord’s favour...to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty”. The bestowal of crowns is

rational/informed decision and personal faith (Col. 2: 12-14) as well as belief and repentance (Acts 2: 38, Ephesian 2:12). The New Testament pattern of Baptism does not match that sketched by Singleton, and indeed appears to give little encouragement to the latter doctrines concerning infant baptism. This indicates that there is some discrepancy between the traditions Dante followed concerning baptism and what the scriptures prescribe concerning baptism. Significantly, as an adult Dante used the scriptures as the basis to inspire his imagery concerning his turning back to Beatrice and God, so that what has been called his “second baptism” (Musa, *Commentary*) describes a fully biblical baptism as described in Acts 2: 36-42, with some slight modifications concerning the drinking of Lethe. Nonetheless we must keep in mind that this tension is unresolved and that Dante tends to affirm both the traditions and the scriptures as both true, attempting to make peace and reconcile them as he did with Christianity and courtly love.

⁶⁹ We must distinguish between this baptism by immersion and drinking of the river Lethe, drinking of Lethe being an original addition to the Christian scheme of salvation by Dante. In antiquity the river Lethe was often referred to as the river from which souls drink after death causing them to forget the past. (In the “Myth of Er” of Plato’s *Republic* all souls drink of the river Lethe after death before being reincarnated. The souls who drank less remembered more and made wiser choices concerning their next life.) This is significant for Dante in that Hell is a place in which the soul cannot forget, being forever bound to its past memories. Dante’s use of Lethe is a means to purify the souls’ “emotional memory of sin” after baptism so that not only have they been forgiven but they forgive themselves and are unaffected by their past sins. Similarly “drinking of the waters of Eunoe, which the Pilgrim and Statius will do later on (XXXIII, 133-35), restores the memory of all good deeds” (see *Purgatorio* XXVIII, 127-29; Musa, *Commentary*, pp. 339-340). The image of drinking from the water of Lethe, alongside and at the same time as the immersion, suggests the coming together of the Christian and pagan culture, once again showing Dante’s desire to affirm both, but which in their coming together and affirmation revive questions as to whether Virgil will be ultimately forgotten and damned, drawing into question the ethical design of the whole.

⁷⁰ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 340; Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 773.

associated with the receiving of salvation through Christ. Thus possession of salvation is described as a “crown of life” (Revelation 2:3), “a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8), and “a crown that will last forever” (I Corinthians 9:25). As the writer of Revelation warns “Hold onto what you have so that no one will take away your crown” (Revelation 3: 11), it is clear that the disciples can lose their salvation. Given that David writes, “take not your holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51: 11), this would imply that the crown is not only salvation but the Holy Spirit, so that to possess the Holy Spirit is equivalent to the promise of eternal salvation. Thus there seems to be an identification of crowns of virtue, salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This view seems strengthened by Acts 2: 3-4, when the Holy Spirit, like “tongues of fire”, came to rest on each of the apostles’ heads. Thus it would seem that Dante’s crown is salvation, a crowning with the Holy Spirit. This is further suggested in that the Virtues are infused into Dante’s head after baptism. In Acts 2:17 echoing Joel 2:28, “in the last days, God....will pour out [his] Spirit on all people” suggesting a sort of infusion, thus suggesting that Dante is in fact representing the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit (following Acts 2:38) as the infusion of the Virtues in the shape of a crown.

The crowning with the cardinal virtues, suggesting the coming of the Holy Spirit, causes the inner strengthening of Dante resulting in the revelation of the nature of Beatrice. The four cardinal virtues say, “Here we are nymphs and in Heaven we are stars. Before Beatrice descended to the world we were ordained to be her handmaids. We will bring thee to her eyes; but for the happy light that is within them the three on the other side, who look deeper, shall quicken thine” (XXXI, 106-111), the other three being the theological virtues.⁷¹ “Preordained handmaids” does not indicate that the mortal Beatrice had a “pre-natal existence” but she was given natural cardinal virtues and *scientia* from birth to prepare her to receive the “revelation of grace”⁷² and *sapientia* and in this way was predestined (Ephesians 1: 4) specifically to be the instrument of Dante’s salvation. Thus the virtues of *scientia*, the cardinal virtues, pursued through philosophy, as well as the theological virtues were with Beatrice by grace. The cardinal virtues,

⁷¹ See *Convivio* (III, xiv, 15) referred to by Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 773. Dante in discussing Beatrice is also playing with the image of Athena as *Sapientia*, and Athens as Heaven, as the place where wisdom is achieved.

⁷² “The Natural Virtues were given to Man from the beginning, to attend on and prepare the special Revelation of Grace which entered the world at the Incarnation.” (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 321)

through calling themselves the “preordained handmaids” of Beatrice, indicate that Beatrice is *Sapientia*⁷³ as Philosophy is the handmaid to Theology, *Scientia* to *Sapientia* (Augustine, *de Trinitate*),⁷⁴ her understanding ultimately covering both *scientia* and *sapientia*.⁷⁵ Thus following Dante’s crowning with the Holy Spirit, Beatrice is revealed as *Sapientia*, thereby indicating that the Holy Spirit reveals wisdom and truth.⁷⁶

5. The Unveiling of Beatrice

Sapientia’s identification with Beatrice makes more complex the representation of Beatrice in that while echoing *Sapientia*’s descent into the world accompanied by the virtues, Beatrice maintains her particular identity.⁷⁷ As Singleton reminds us, Dante takes Beatrice from the *Vita Nuova* both as a particular individual and as an ideal woman⁷⁸ and merges her with the Lady *Sapientia* from the *Convivio*⁷⁹ in the *Commedia*, thereby bringing together real life, courtly love and Christian theology into one individual, Beatrice.

This complexity in turn is articulated more fully once the Virtues bring Dante towards Beatrice who faces the Griffin, at which point Beatrice assumes the role of “Revelation” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 775), revealed wisdom, as her wisdom begins

⁷³ This is further suggested in that she has seven handmaids which represent the seven pillars of wisdom. See Proverbs 9:1: “Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns.”

⁷⁴ This suggests that Pietro’s reading is incorrect. Philosophy is not the *pargoletta* but, as Grandgent maintains, acts as a support to Theology—acts as the handmaid of Theology—indicating in retrospect that the *pargoletta* is general worldliness including the sins of the flesh.

⁷⁵ Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 114.

⁷⁶ Given that Dante has been crowned with the Holy Spirit and then sees *Sapientia*, this raises the question as to what is the relationship between *Sapientia* and the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that he will send the Holy Spirit of truth (John 16: 7-11; John 1:17; Acts 2:18). Awareness/recognition of truth is wisdom, *sapientia*. Furthermore, in Genesis 1:2 “the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” This passage Augustine in his *Confessions* interprets as the Holy Spirit, part of the Trinity which along with the *Logos* was with God in the beginning prior to creation. *Sapientia* says in Proverbs 8:22-23, “The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world”. Clearly there is a close relationship between *Sapientia* and the Holy Spirit. Though *Sapientia* is not identical with the Holy Spirit as she is the first born, with the coming of the Holy Spirit *Sapientia* is revealed, wisdom is recognized. Thus the Spirit of truth reveals/brings the Wisdom of truth.

⁷⁷ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 774.

⁷⁸ In *Vita Nuova* X, 2 “she is declared to be the ‘*regina de le vertudi*’ (‘queen of the virtues’) and (in *Vita Nuova* XXVI, 6) ‘*una cosa venuta / da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare*’ (‘a thing come from Heaven to earth, to show forth a miracle’)” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 774) and a true example of the *donna angelica*.

⁷⁹ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 774.

to be revealed. This unveiling is accomplished first through her eyes which at this point become the means by which her mortal and divine natures are revealed. The Nymphs initially direct Dante to “the emeralds from which love once shot his darts at thee” (XXXI, 115-117), the beautiful green eyes⁸⁰ of the mortal Beatrice which in Florence ten years ago had overpowered him.⁸¹

However now Beatrice’s eyes simultaneously reveal spiritual truths which strengthen Dante’s hope. “Beatrice’s shining eyes, which remained still fixed on the Griffin, and even like the sun in a mirror the two-fold beast shone within them, now with one, now with the other nature. Think, reader, if I marvelled when I saw the thing still in itself and in its image changing” (XXXI, 118-126). In the eyes of Beatrice, which functioned as a mirror reflecting the true nature of God, Dante saw the two-fold nature of Christ changing back and forth from mortal to immortal aspects which is the central mystery of Christianity⁸² suggesting Wisdom of Solomon 7:26 in which “*Sapientia* is termed a mirror of the majesty of God.”⁸³ Dante refers to Beatrice as being “like the sun in a mirror”, he comparing her to a mirror reflecting the light of God. This image recalls Exodus 34: 29; when Moses wore a veil because his “face was radiant because he had spoken to the Lord”.⁸⁴ Similarly, this image refers to disciples/Christians “who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3: 18). These are the precise terms in *Paradiso* I in which Dante describes Beatrice: as a mirror reflecting the sun giving the impression of two suns.⁸⁵ There Beatrice as the reflection/image of God (Genesis 1:27), reflects so strongly the light of God that it causes Dante to change within and empowers Dante to ascend to God. However, here the idea of her eyes as mirrors, reminiscent of *First Alcibiades* 132c-133c,⁸⁶ also suggests 1 Cor. 13:12: “We see now through a mirror in an obscure manner, then we shall see face to

⁸⁰ Contrary to Sayers (p. 321), Grandgent (p. 598) believes the meaning of green eyes has spiritual implications symbolically extending beyond the literal in that “green is considered to be the color of hope and the emerald, too, was thought to preserve and strengthen the sight”.

⁸¹ See *Phaedrus* 255c-d in which love is transmitted through the eyes.

⁸² Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 766.

⁸³ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 775, also p. 779.

⁸⁴ Also see Plato’s *Phaedo* 99d.

⁸⁵ *Paradiso* I, lines 46-75.

⁸⁶ According to Barker (2002), as *First Alcibiades* was a text favoured by Neo-Platonist commentaries, there may be a Platonic influence with regard to this imagery.

face.” Dante sees God obscurely through her eyes rather than face to face and he can not understand the natures in Christ in their unity,⁸⁷ which will remain a mystery to the last moment.⁸⁸

Thus we see that while maintaining her human nature, the “green eyes”, she also through her eyes reveals Christ and in doing so her immortal nature.⁸⁹ Furthermore this human and divine alternation illuminates the use of Beatrice as a Christ-like figure and also the analogy between Christ and Beatrice.⁹⁰ In a sense she is a vessel that Christ has filled. (See 2 Corinthian 4: 7.) While still her old self, she is now the new Beatrice with indwelling Christ, the human and immortal nature of Christ which she echoes and therefore doubly reveals.⁹¹

When Dante continues, “While my soul, full of amazement and gladness, tasted of that food which, satisfying with itself, for itself makes appetite” he alludes to the spiritual fulfilment he experiences gazing at Beatrice⁹² as satisfying his hunger for the truth of God.⁹³ As if it is Beatrice through whom this food comes, Dante, as we also saw earlier, draws a correlation between Beatrice and the Host.⁹⁴ Therefore, Dante suggests that

⁸⁷ Musa, *Commentary*, p. 341. “Revealed theology analyzes the nature of Christ into its two component parts, although in reality they are eternally joined into one.” (Grandgent, p. 598)

⁸⁸ Although at present Dante sees in part through the reflection of Beatrice’s eyes eventually he will see face to face. (I Cor. 13:12-13; *Paradiso* XXXIII, 127-45. For a different perspective see Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove* pp. 133-4.)

⁸⁹ This is a significant modification of sight and eyes. Previously, as with the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* and courtly love, the lover loved with his eyes and the physical vision of the beloved was inseparable from the act of love, then Beatrice’s physical beauty was Dante’s “highest delight” (*Purgatorio* XXXI, 52). However, here the eyes and mouth have become the vehicles whereby spiritual truths are expressed. This marks the transition from eyes used to perceive false images of the good to the use of eyes to reveal and perceive the good itself. This latter view resembles *Phaedrus* 250d, 254b and also see Romans 1: 20.

⁹⁰ Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 117.

⁹¹ Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, p. 114.

⁹² “The food that makes one hungrier is the Truth that comes through Revelation (Beatrice) and that points always to something higher, to Christ himself.” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 341)

⁹³ First, Dante is paraphrasing the words of *Sapientia* in Ecclus. 24:21: “They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty,” showing Beatrice to provide nourishing truth and wisdom as “man does not live on bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). Second, Dante, seems to paraphrase Augustine’s *Confessions*, 10, 38: “I taste you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you.” Sayers (*Commentary*, p. 128) interprets the “food” as meaning literally, love; allegorically the “food” is Christ (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 321). Christ is referred to as the bread from Heaven; John 6:35, 48-51, 53-56. (In the Bible, images of hunger and thirst are often used to describe a passionate desire for God: Psalm 42: 1-2; John 4: 13-14. To the Samaritan woman Christ says “He who drinks my water will never thirst”. This is continued in the Christian tradition by thinkers like Augustine in *Confessions* 3, 1) Lastly Jesus commands his disciples to eat his body and drink his blood “in memory of [him]” (Luke 22: 19; 1 Corinthian 11: 24-25) which is the taking of communion—the bread and wine, the Host.

⁹⁴ Sinclair, pp. 415-416.

Beatrice spiritually nourishes him like wisdom and Christ.

Yet to increase this fulfilment further, the Virtues referring to Dante as Beatrice's "faithful one"⁹⁵ requests that of her "grace do us the grace to unveil [her] mouth to him" (XXXI, 133-135). While the eyes of Beatrice in reflecting the incomprehensible double nature of Christ represents the central mystery of Christianity which enables the human soul to be redeemed, the mouth reveals the inner light that expresses the joy of the revelation/comprehension of God, the unity of the double nature of Christ and the effect of this revelation on the soul, seeing God face to face and therefore salvation.⁹⁶ For this reason the beauty of Beatrice's eyes and smile act as a lure through their increasing beauty by which Dante reaches Paradise,⁹⁷ as we shall discuss in the next chapter.

The revelation of Beatrice's mouth, the inner joy and light of her soul, as it expresses the joy in seeing God face to face and of salvation, moves beyond not only the comprehensible but also the representable. Dante the poet writes

O splendour of living light eternal, who has ever grown so pale under Parnassus' shade or drunk so deep of its well that he would not seem to have a mind disabled, trying to render thee as thou appearedst there, Heaven with its harmonies overhanging thee, when in the free air thou didst disclose thyself? (XXXI, 139-145)

As "splendour" in the *Commedia* refers to "reflected light", Beatrice in the sun images and in particular *Paradiso* I is the reflection or revelation of God's light⁹⁸ which will be intensified, increasing in brilliance as Dante climbs towards the throne of God in

⁹⁵ Dante in XXXI, 133-135 is again referred to as Beatrice's "faithful one" (cf. *Inferno* II, 98) having been forgiven for straying after her death. Yet as Musa points out beneath the surface he had always been "[unconsciously faithful which guided]... his steps back to his beloved Beatrice" (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 341; see also Sinclair, p. 413). "For sight of thee, has made so great a journey" (XXXI, 135) clearly indicates that Beatrice has been thus far the *telos* of Dante's journey.

⁹⁶ The mouth in the *Convivio* is of particular importance as it and the eyes are the areas where the soul reveals itself; "For what is a smile but a coruscation of the joy of the soul, like the outward shining of an Inward light?" (*Conv.* iii. 8; Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 777) In *Convivio* III, 15, "the eyes of wisdom are her demonstrations, whereby the truth is seen most certainly, and her smile is her persuasions, whereby the inner light of wisdom is revealed behind a certain veil; and in these two is felt that loftiest joy of blessedness which is the supreme good in Paradise." "With Beatrice's smile comes the unveiled or inner light of wisdom: the promise of salvation for all mankind" (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 342).

⁹⁷ Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 321.

⁹⁸ "The word 'splendour' in Dante always means reflected light: Beatrice is the reflected image of the Divine light" (Sayers, *Commentary*, p. 321). "A mirror or reflection of God's light... (Her name Revelation and her name *Sapientia* are emphasized here, for *revelatio* means an 'unveiling')." (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 778)

Paradiso. God is incomprehensible until the sudden revelation of God at the end of the *Paradiso* XXXIII, though the content, the vision itself, Dante immediately forgets after experiencing it. He remembers having had the vision and the feelings though he is entirely incapable of representing and expressing it as he has no terms by which to define even those memories. Likewise at this lower level in the earthly Paradise, at the revelation of the smile of Beatrice Dante is left without words or any means to express the beauty and goodness to which he bears witness. Therefore he asks who of the poets like himself in their labours towards excellence could portray the beauty of Beatrice unveiled.⁹⁹

The only remaining veil over Beatrice is “Heaven with its harmonies,” which as Singleton notes seems to refer to the canopy of “the seven streamers of light”, comparable to a rainbow and which symbolize “the seven-fold Spirit of the Lord”.¹⁰⁰ With this Heaven as a constant background, suggesting God’s first covenant of grace with the world, Beatrice through her analogy with Christ acts as the entrance of God’s grace¹⁰¹ into Dante’s life echoing John 1: 16-17, the unveiling of which reveals the

⁹⁹ Unlike the Sinclair translation of “*chi*” as “who” which tends to be misleading, a more appropriate translation is “Whoever’, i.e., whichever poet, in his dedication to his art and inspiration” (Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 778). “Dante is referring to these who, like himself, labor tirelessly at mastering the art of poetry. Even the best of poets would have difficulty describing the unveiled beauty of Beatrice” (Musa, *Commentary*, p. 342). Not only is the beauty of Beatrice incomprehensible and indescribable but also even his description stretches beyond a “systematic reading” (Brandeis, *A Ladder of Vision*, pp. 109-110).

¹⁰⁰ Singleton, *Commentary*, p. 778.

¹⁰¹ Singleton refers this to the spirit which the prophet Isaiah had foreseen would come to rest over the Christ who was to come—see Isaiah 11:2: “*Et requiescat super eum spiritus Domini.*” (“And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.”). This allusion, though significant, is rather ambiguous as the rainbow and the Spirit descending as a dove are related images, yet are not the same. In Mathew 3:16, the sign of the spirit resting upon Jesus is not a rainbow but a dove. It must be remembered that in Genesis 8: 8-11 Noah sent out a dove to see if “the water had receded...When the dove returned...there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf!” (Beatrice, of course, is crowned with olive leaves and Jesus was taken from the Mount of Olives). Following the recession of the waters, God made the rainbow as a sign of the first covenant between God, mankind and every living thing for all generations to come; “never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life” (Genesis 9:15). By making the rainbow the background and only remaining veil of Beatrice, we are pointed back to the first binding promise of God to his creation (after creation itself) not to destroy by water. Given man’s original transgression and repeated offence to God, this is a sign of his continued fidelity and desire for a relationship with his creation and therefore is the first sign of grace which ultimately came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17), who is seen in the eyes of Beatrice. (See in 1 Peter 3: 20-21 the connection of Noah, salvation and baptism.) The beginning of Jesus’ ministry was marked by the descent of the Holy Spirit onto him in the shape of a dove (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22), as this was the moment that Christ was revealed to Israel (John 1:31). The dove is therefore the extension of this grace and peace from God to man, that commitment of love and forgiveness like the rainbow making them related in signification and comprehensible in terms of Dante’s linking them to Beatrice, given her repeated analogy with Christ.

“splendour of living light eternal” through the eyes and mouth of Beatrice as we shall discuss in the next chapter with regard to the *Paradiso*. In this way Beatrice, having in the *Vita Nuova* initiated his new life through his love of her, here oversees Dante’s Biblical conversion resulting in his salvation which involves understanding the cross, confession of sins, repentance, baptism for the forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through acting as a midwife, Beatrice having descended from Heaven enables Dante to be reborn and spiritually transformed, leading him to be reconciled with God. In this way she is an expression of God’s love and grace for him and as such a new Eve-figure. Therefore in *Paradiso* “in the seats of the third rank” just below “Eve, so lovely, at Mary’s feet” (*Paradiso* XXXII, 7-9) sits Beatrice (see Pelikan, p. 75). While Dante, following in Christ’s steps descends into Hell and ascends to Heaven, thereby acting as the new Adam (Romans 5:14), so Beatrice redeemed and now a saint,¹⁰² represents the new Eve. Yet the journey does not end with Beatrice, for she points beyond herself to Mary who ultimately points to God.¹⁰³ This shows her to be a *poros* figure causing not only self-knowledge but initiating a full rebirth in Dante bringing him to salvation and reconciliation with God.

Thus Dante has employed both pagan myth and sections of the Bible to formulate the role of Beatrice, as he did with Francesca. Francesca is represented through the pagan myth of Venus and Mars as earthly Venus and through the Bible as Eve. Functioning as two sides of a coin, the pagan and Christian imagery reinforce her role as seductress embodying earthly *eros*, *concupiditas*, and its *penia*. Likewise Beatrice’s role is supported by both pagan and Christian sources.¹⁰⁴ Dante through the majority of *Purgatorio* XXX represents Beatrice as Heavenly Venus as articulated through his continued allusions to *Aeneid* I in which Venus rebukes Aeneas. Yet this correlation shows its limitation in that, like courtly love which begins as virtuous ideal love and degenerates, so Venus sends Aeneas off to Dido. For this reason Dante corrects Virgil

¹⁰² For a discussion of the literary and theological risks see Pelikan, p. 71.

¹⁰³ Pelikan (p. 75) notes how “one Eternal Feminine, the Lady Beatrice as *donna mia*, points beyond herself to the other two Eternal Feminines: the Bride of Christ, the Church as *bella donna*; and the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary as *nostra regina*”.

¹⁰⁴ Francesca is treated with the intimacy of a real human being and individual for whom Dante has great feeling and compassion while Beatrice is a beautiful ideal, someone he adores, aspires to and would do anything for but whom he does not know. In this way Beatrice remains forever Dante’s *donna angelica*.

through showing Beatrice to always have been from God, an expression of God's grace and love for Dante (indicating the transforming of Heavenly *eros* into *caritas*). As the new Eve acting as midwife she causes him to see his sins and initiates, oversees and leads him through a biblical conversion according to the pattern of Acts 2: 36-41. After this Dante understands her to be *Sapientia*, the wisdom of God, the unveiling of which is revelation, leading Dante to God through *Paradiso*. Through both types of imagery, her pagan role as Heavenly Venus and her Christian roles as a Christ-like figure and the new Eve, she acts as a *poros* (way through). The pagan *poros* of Heavenly *eros* is subsumed by the greater *poros* of Christian *caritas* and therefore enacts the conversion of Heavenly *eros* into *caritas*, the means of which is Beatrice who is foremost an expression of God's grace, a gift from God sent to help Dante and lead him back to God through the coming together of her beauty and his Word.

We turn now to the role of the figure of Beatrice in the *Paradiso* where, we shall find, she and the other blessed souls are the bearers of central metaphors and analogies for both the nature of *eros* and the object which *eros* desires, God. In the *Paradiso* most of the analogies are of a body-involving nature.¹ They include primarily images of the face, the smile, the eyes, music and dance, although more conventional images such as that of light are also employed. Given that Dante uses essentially a Thomist epistemology, for him the divine is positively understood only in analogical terms, primarily through the analogy of proper proportionality, so that an analysis of these images in the context of his understanding of the role of analogy, is crucial to grasping how Dante conceives of the object of heavenly *eros*. Such an approach also sheds light on why for Dante the individual is not dispensable at any stage of the ascent. This is not merely an afterthought or an isolated idiosyncrasy on Dante's part, but is structurally connected with his epistemology and his ontology of the divine. Central to this discussion is how Dante conceives of the object of heavenly *eros*; the goal of desire being intellectual vision of the divine is clearly of Thomist (and ultimately Aristotelian/Platonic) inspiration, which is not to say of course that his analogies always unambiguously support the orthodox Thomist view.

1. Analogy

Before examining how Dante uses analogy in his depiction of Beatrice and the other heavenly souls, we must first consider what analogy is and in particular the analogy of proper proportionality. In order to understand the term "analogy" in a theological context it is useful to turn to Ferré. Ferré (p. 67) maintains that the central problematic or issue with regard to theological language is the need to avoid both anthropomorphism and agnosticism. Yet the fact that we think and express ourselves in human language results in the "[imposition] of human categories" upon everything so that theological

¹ As noted by Poellner, Personal Communications, 2002.

language ultimately reveals more about “man than God”.² With the first extreme of anthropomorphism, which tends towards and results from the affirmative way (or the way of affirmation), God is reduced to a mere “part of a natural order, ‘for clearly causes and effects are terms in a single series and belong to the same order of reality’, and God’s perfections are reduced to the level delimited by human imagination”.³ With the other extreme, which tends towards agnosticism by following the way of negation or the *via negativa*, “‘cause’, ‘mover’, ‘perfection’, ‘existing’, ‘being’, and the like, are emptied of meaning when predicated of God”.⁴ This results in an *aporia* in that “if God exists in the same sense as finite beings, God is incapable of fulfilling the function which makes him necessary”,⁵ hence God is not God is the inevitable consequence of the use here of univocal language.⁶ However if God is seen “as cause and existence in a completely different sense then we can attribute to him ‘no intelligible content’”,⁷ whereby the term “God” is meaningless, “emptied of meaning”, the consequence of interpreting theological language as equivocal⁸ (equivocation here tends towards an undisciplined and meaningless use of language).⁹ According to this *aporia* “God” is shown as “either useless or unthinkable”.¹⁰ “If univocal, then language falls into anthropomorphism and cannot be about God; if equivocal, then language bereft of its meaning leads to agnosticism and cannot for us be about God”.¹¹

² See also Mascall, p. 62 and Farrer, p. 2.

³ Ferré, p. 68.

⁴ Ferré, p. 68.

⁵ Mascall, p. 87.

⁶ “The univocal language, which makes the object of his talk no longer ‘God’ because merely comparable to the rest of his experience”. (Ferré, p. 69)

⁷ Mascall, p. 87.

⁸ “Equivocal language...‘cleanses’ the terms used in describing God entirely of any anthropomorphism they might ordinarily possess but thereby forces the theist into a position of total agnosticism, capable of knowing nothing as to the meaning of his words-about-God—not even knowing whether ‘existence’ when applied to ‘God’ has any relationship to its ordinary human use.” (Ferré, p. 69)

⁹ If seen in the “formal” mode, the central problem is “how human language, despite its anthropocentric nature, may be given a use within a theological context while escaping both the univocality which gives rise to anthropomorphism and the sheer undisciplined meaninglessness of equivocation.” (Ferré, p. 76)

¹⁰ Ferré, p. 68.

¹¹ Ferré, p. 69; also see Mascall, p. 117. According to Copleston (“The Meaning of the Terms Predicated of God” in *Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 96): “It would appear...that the theistic philosopher is faced with a dilemma. If he pursues exclusively the negative way, he ends in sheer agnosticism, for he whittles away the positive meaning which a term originally had for him until nothing is left. If, however, he pursues exclusively the affirmative way, he lands in anthropomorphism. But if he attempts to combine the two ways, as indeed he must if he is to avoid both extremes, his mind appears to oscillate between anthropomorphism and agnosticism.”

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, it is not possible to say anything univocally of God and creatures since creation does not represent its cause perfectly, so what is unified and simple in the cause, God, is divided up and in different forms in its effect, creation, like the sun and what it produces. Thus diverse and multiple perfections in creation “preexist in God as one”.¹² However, the words used to describe the perfections of creation are different pointing to different perfections, as in man’s wisdom which is distinct from his existence, powers and essence. Yet in God, wisdom, essence, existence, and powers are one, not each signifying something different as God is a unity. When man is called “wise”, the word “contains and delimits the aspect of man that it signifies”.¹³ When this word however is used about God goes beyond the normal meaning of the word, since for Aquinas though the names applied to God “designate the divine substance and are predicated of God substantially... [they] fall short of representing him”.¹⁴ Thus neither “wisdom” nor any other word can be used univocally of creatures and of God. Nor however do we equivocate when we speak with regard to the relationship of man and God because man knows God through his creation, as shown through Romans 1: 20.¹⁵ Therefore given that both equivocating and speaking univocally are insufficient means of discussing the relationship of God and man, Aquinas turns to a middle way, that of analogy.

Farrer (p. 88) explicates analogy as “a relation between objects capable of being classed as ‘likeness’ [which is] reducible to the presence in the similars of an identical abstract characteristic”, a position Ferré disputes but one which we shall later see, with the aid of Mascall, to have substance.¹⁶ In the traditional view analogy is divided into two types, analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality. With the analogy of attribution, in which the two analogates may be vastly different, “the prime analogate possesses the characteristic predicated of it in a ‘formal’ manner, that is, in a wholly proper (univocal) and actual sense, while the other analogate has predicated of it a ‘like’

¹² *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 13, 5.

¹³ *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 13, 5.

¹⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, I, xiii, 2C.

¹⁵ *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 13, 5.

¹⁶ This implies the proposition that God shares one abstractable characteristic, “being”, with finite beings, a position examined and critiqued by Ferré as analogy’s “ontological presupposition”.

characteristic in a relative or derivative sense”.¹⁷ This indicates an unequal relation in which only one analogate is deserving to have the predicate in a formal sense¹⁸ though there is nonetheless a real relation or a “prior relationship”.¹⁹ “In its theological application, where the analogates concerned are God and a creature, the relation upon which the analogy is based will be that of creative causality; creatures are related to God as his effects...for example, by the Thomist Five Ways”.²⁰ This indicates that “God has goodness or being in whatever way is necessary if he is to be able to produce goodness and being in his creatures”.²¹ Thus God necessarily possesses goodness and being virtually, though this does not exclude the possibility that he may possess them formally also. Indeed God is said to possess them “eminently”. Ontologically speaking, God is the prime analogate, “the Father, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3: 14-15)—thus from this perspective, since all fatherhood other than that of the Creator is derivative, its “naming” with respect to creatures may be understood as, in this sense, involving secondary predication.

With the analogy of proportionality, while both terms possess the common characteristic or analogue formally “in a literal and unmetaphorical sense”,²² each possesses it only proportionately or in a mode or way which is appropriate to and determined by the nature of the analogates involved,²³ as shown by the example that the ocean and Jonathan’s eyes are blue. In terms of its theological application, “‘God’s goodness’ is neither something unrelated to ‘man’s goodness’ nor merely identical to human virtue”.²⁴ God’s goodness is to God as human goodness is to man.

$$\frac{\text{God's goodness}}{\text{God}} = \frac{\text{Man's goodness}}{\text{Man}}$$

¹⁷ Ferré, p. 70.

¹⁸ Ferré (p. 70) uses the example that both mountains and men are healthy. Mountain resorts are derivatively healthy because they cause health in men formally.

¹⁹ A mountain resort is healthy as it produces health in men. (Ferré, p. 70)

²⁰ Mascall, p. 102.

²¹ Mascall, p. 102.

²² Ferré, p. 70.

²³ Ferré, p. 71; also see Mascall, p. 104.

²⁴ Ferré, p. 71.

However certain problems arise with these types of analogy. Mascall critiques analogy of proportionality claiming that a problem arises in the “unambiguous equals sign”²⁵; “the equal sign means not identity but similarity”.²⁶ Ferré first claims that this results in an infinite regression away from univocal meaning and secondly points to the problem of the presence of two unknowns in the equation which shows the equation to be unsolvable²⁷, providing no knowledge concerning the nature of God nor any justification for the language used to describe his characteristics. Again, from analogy of attribution we deduce only that what can produce an effect can produce an effect, God as the cause of goodness in men possesses goodness virtually while men possess it formally though this does not necessitate that he is not formally good in himself.²⁸ Thus analogy of attribution “tells us nothing beyond God being the cause of finite phenomena”. This is problematic as analogy of attribution is dependent on the reality of a relation which in itself “determines whether the analogy is appropriate. The existence of the relation cannot be proved by analogical argument but needs independent grounds for asserting it”.²⁹ The second problem with analogy of attribution is that it “admits no control” to the predicates used in a virtual sense to describe God many of which are inappropriate.³⁰ Ferré (p. 75) suggests that any claim that some of God’s perfections are formally and others virtually appropriate also implies a prior understanding of the words describing God’s nature which returns us to the same problem.

However in contrast to Ferré who places the weight of his critique of the traditional understanding of analogy on its ontological presupposition³¹, Mascall argues that its ontological basis may be seen as justifying/validating the theological use of analogy where analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality are treated as

²⁵ Ferré, p. 72.

²⁶ Mascall, p. 105.

²⁷ Ferré, p. 72; and also see Mascall, pp. 104-6.

²⁸ Ferré, p. 74

²⁹ Ferré, pp. 73-4.

³⁰ Ferré, p. 74. Analogy of attribution is far too permissive as it always applies “all conceivable predicates to [God] in the virtual sense” so that God as maker of the earth is heavy, multi-coloured etc.

³¹ With regard to the problem of ontological presuppositions, Ferré (pp. 75-6) draws attention to the view that analogy depends upon an underlying abstract characteristic, being. He relates this to the theory of universals, which he finds problematic, and then goes on to emphasize the difficulty in assuming the existence of a common characteristic present in both God and man. This, he believes, is rebutted by the theological position of total depravity and the philosophical view that the supposition of common quality between man and God is incompatible with God as infinite. The finite can not be identical to the infinite, so the ontological foundations on which the logic of analogy rests must be abandoned.

inseparable.³² As God’s qualities, whether goodness or wisdom, are part of his essence so all statements about God have “existential reference...Since in God essence and existence are identical, any assertion about God’s essence is at the same time an assertion about existence; anything which is affirmed to be included in God’s nature is at the same time affirmed to exist and indeed to be self-existent”.³³ By this “inherently existential element” Mascall maintains “the possibility of analogical knowledge of God and of analogical discourse.” The attempt to conceive “God’s goodness—an attempt which is doomed to failure—issues in an affirmation that self-existent goodness exists...Goodness exists self-existingly [by which] the fundamental dependence of analogical predication upon the metaphysical analogy of being is made clear”.³⁴ Thus,

$$\frac{\text{Goodness of finite being}}{\text{Finite being}} = \frac{\text{Goodness of God}}{\text{God}}$$

This is an existential judgement which articulates the synthesizing of analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality. This synthesis is necessary because analogy of attribution asserts in the conceptual and existential order that finite being can exist only in dependence upon God.

Thus in contrast to Ferré who conceives of the use of analogy as a means not to inform but to limit the use of language,³⁵ Mascall views analogy not as enabling “us to *conceive* God’s goodness as identical with his essence but to *affirm* it as identical with his existence. Hence all our assertions about God are grossly inadequate in so far as they apply concepts to him, but they are thoroughly adequate in so far as they affirm

³² Mascall (p. 113) argues that in order “to make the doctrine of analogy really satisfactory, we must see the analogical relation between God and the world as combining in a tightly interlocked union both analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality. Without analogy of proportionality it is very doubtful whether the attributes which we predicate of God can be ascribed to him in more than a merely virtual sense; without analogy of attribution it hardly seems possible to avoid agnosticism.” (Mascall, p. 113)

³³ Mascall, pp. 119-120.

³⁴ Mascall, p. 120.

³⁵ Ferré indicates that analogy is not able to inform us concerning the actual nature of God but instead is useful if understood as “one means of providing criteria for the disciplined use of ordinary language in theological contexts, looking for its value on the ‘formal’ rather than ‘material’ mode of speech.” (Ferré, p. 76) In this way the logic of analogy rests on no ontological assumptions of an identity between God and man. “Its function is not to inform but rather to limit the proper employment of language within the framework of theistic systematic assumptions.” (Ferré, p. 77)

perfections of him.”³⁶ This is not the place for an assessment of Mascall’s analysis, but some form of synthesis of the analogies of attribution and of proportionality can plausibly be seen as required by the Thomist tradition and seems to be implicit in Dante. Given such an understanding of analogy we shall now turn back to Beatrice in *Paradiso* to explore in which ways she is an analogical figure.

2. Beatrice and analogy

Through Dante’s representation of Beatrice he articulates the nature of love and God, the object which this love desires. Therefore the two questions we must ask ourselves are how does Beatrice articulate the nature of love and secondly how does she represent the nature of God. The answer is that through Beatrice, both love and God are understood and represented through images of the body, analogies of proper proportionality which are connected to analogies of attribution.

One of the central challenges of the *Paradiso* is the difficulty in the representation of the pilgrim’s pursuit of a personal vision of the infinite eternal God³⁷ who exceeds comprehension. The pilgrim desires an intellectual vision, suggesting a Thomist influence (and therefore perhaps a Platonic/Aristotelian inspiration). “I see man’s mind cannot be satisfied unless it be illumined by that Truth beyond which there exists no other truth. Within that Truth, once man’s mind reaches it, it rests like a wild beast within its den. And it can reach it—if not, all desire is vain!” (*Paradiso* IV, 124-129)³⁸ However as Pertile points out while “Dante seems to favour in theory a form of active contemplation through knowledge, placing first ‘*l’atto che vede*’ [‘the act of vision’] and second “*quel ch’ama*” [“that which loves”] (*Paradiso*, XXVIII. 110-11), in practice however his pilgrim’s vision is poetically portrayed and lived through in affective terms”,³⁹ diverging from Thomism and Aristotelianism. The presence of both the intellectual and affective

³⁶ Mascall, p. 120.

³⁷ A personal vision of God involves seeing God face to face which “means both seeing Him and being seen by Him” (Pertile, p. 146).

³⁸ “A ray of God’s light focuses on me and penetrates the light enwombing me, whose force once joined to that of my own sight lifts me above myself until I see the Primal Source from which such might is milked. From this derives the joy with which I burn; the clearness of my flame will ever match my clarity of spiritual vision.” (*Paradiso*, XXI, 83-90)

³⁹ Pertile, p. 163.

aspects is demonstrated when Dante writes, “We have gone beyond—from greatest sphere to heaven of pure light, light of the intellect, light full of love, love of the true good, full of ecstasy, ecstasy that transcends the sweetest joy” (*Paradiso*, XXX, 38-45). “The supreme aim, hope and... promise implicit in the pilgrim's ascent is precisely to restore the unity and identity, beyond desire, of knowing and possessing.”⁴⁰ However, this union with God which the pilgrim achieves in his final vision can not be penetrated with the intellect as it is beyond comprehension, description and even memory, though remaining an affective experience, God being the ultimate object and *telos* of *eros*.⁴¹ “I have been in His brightest shining heaven and seen such things that no man, once returned from there, has wit or skill to tell about; for when our intellect draws near its goal and fathoms to the depths of its desire, the memory is powerless to follow.” (*Paradiso*, I, 1-12)⁴² Due to this limitation in language and thought, the pilgrim resorts to familiar body-images to form analogies for his pursuit of the divine and for God himself as the divine can only be understood in analogical terms.

Analogies involving the body are maintained throughout Dante's ascent in *Paradiso*. This employment of the body can be understood in three ways. First, the object of heavenly *eros* is God. Christ is God in the flesh, God embodied. At the centre of the depiction of God in *Paradiso* XXXIII, Dante describes the presence of man's image in God's “first reflected light”, his Logos (John 1: 1-3) which is God. “That circling which, as I conceive it, shone in You as Your own first reflected light when I had looked deep into It a while, seemed in Itself and in Its own Self-colour to be depicted with man's very

⁴⁰ Pertile, p. 164.

⁴¹ “And I, who was drawing near to the end of all desires, raised to its utmost, even as I ought, the ardour of my longing.” (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 46-48)

⁴² Also see *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 127-139; “Here, clearly, is God one and triune; yet still a symbol, not God's reality, face to face, but a geometric figure that tantalizes more than it satisfies. The pilgrim gazes at it, until he perceives painted in the second circle—that of the Son of Man—and, amazingly, in the same colours as that circle, the image of our human likeness (lines 127-31); but how that image fits the circle and how it finds its place in it remains a mystery (lines 137-38). The poet and we, his readers, know that this is the very vision the pilgrim has been yearning for all through Paradise; yet, now that we have come to it, the vision does not release the secret of its making. The pilgrim still stares at it, he vainly strives to find the key that will unlock its mystery, as a geometer who eagerly seeks the formula for the squaring of the circle (lines 133-36); his desire to see and comprehend now reaches its peak, but the wings of his understanding are much too weak to carry him on such a flight (line 139). At this crucial, climactic point the “*disagguaglianza*” [“inequality”] between “*voglia e argomento*” [“will and faculty”], which he has been striving to overcome all along, reemerges unabated as a peremptory reminder of his, and our own, inescapable humanity.” (Pertile, p. 170)

image.” (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 127-131) He then goes on to say, as if a geometer trying to square a circle so “I yearned to know how could our image fit into that circle” (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 137). Thus being in accord with the Biblical physical ascension of Christ (Acts 1: 9; also John 20: 1-18), at the very pinnacle of heaven, in God himself, God is depicted in man’s image. Thus in *Paradiso*, the body is never totally dispensed with, as Dante ascends towards the resurrected Christ.

Secondly, after the resurrection according to Aquinas man regains his physical body. Following this Thomist position, Dante believes that at the Final Judgment man will receive back his physical body (*Inferno*, XIII. 103). This may result in the intensification of the soul’s punishment and humiliation as in the case of Francesca and Paolo of *Inferno* V, or in the forming of a more perfected state as with the redeemed souls of *Paradiso*, reflecting Christ who according to Aquinas was a “perfectly embodied [soul]”.⁴³ Therefore, it is perfectly justifiable that images of the body are used in the depiction of Dante’s ascent for the reason that the body is not ultimately rejected or transcended but is resumed in the New Jerusalem as being part of man’s perfected state.

Lastly, significant and central to the concern of representation, in Romans 1: 20 Paul writes “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made”. As God’s qualities are visible in creation, through examining creation man comes to understand the nature of God. Thus through examining the beauty, goodness, truth, etc., in the physical creation, man is pointed beyond the visible, thinkable and knowable to the inexpressible beauty, goodness and truth of God who is the true object of love from which all beauty, goodness and truth are derived.⁴⁴ This is a proof of the existence of God through contingency which both Augustine⁴⁵ and Dante after him⁴⁶ see as merged with

⁴³ Brandeis, p. 127.

⁴⁴ Beatrice “[explains] that the eternal light of truth is the true object of love and that any other becomes such only because the Eternal Light shines through it in its beauty. ‘If I flame on thee in the warmth of love, beyond the measure witnessed upon earth, and so vanquish the power of thine eyes, marvel not; for this proceedeth from perfect vision’... (*Paradiso*. V, 1-5)” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 155).

⁴⁵ According to Augustine, creation points towards God in two ways. First, Augustine in *Confessions* X.9 traces the ladder of Beauty when he describes his search for God in creation: “And I replied unto these, which stand so round about these doors of my flesh: Answer me concerning my God since you are not he, answer me something of him. And they cried out with a loud voice: He made us. My questioning with them was my thought; and their answer was their beauty.” (Also see Psalm 144 and Augustine’s analysis of it concerning the “revealing power of beauty” Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 72.) “God ordered his

the ladder of beauty by which God is pointed to and pursued.⁴⁷ In contrast to Neoplatonism⁴⁸, for them the purpose of these qualities in creation is to act as a lure by which man is drawn back to an awareness and relationship with his creator. Thus for Dante “All human beauty, natural or portrayed, is bait, serving to capture and fix the eyes so as to possess the mind”⁴⁹ and ultimately reveal God and draw the lost soul back to him. (See *Paradiso* 1: 103-108.)

In this context, the beauty of the body acts as a lure towards the divine according to analogy of attribution. Analogy of attribution, as we saw, describes an unequal relation between God and creation, cause and effect, God being the prime analogate possessing beauty, goodness and truth primarily and eminently while Beatrice and the other heavenly beings as God’s effects are predicated of these characteristics by a likeness in a relative and derivative sense. Thus all the characteristics of God are seen in a likeness through his creation, or creation reveals or points towards God and heaven which are beyond comprehension and indescribable in human language. (See *Paradiso*, I, 5-9).⁵⁰ As

creation like the steps of a ladder extending from earth to heaven, from the visible to the invisible, from the mortal to the immortal” which form a scale of beauty (*sed dissimilibus temperata*) which causes both participants and observers to praise God “admiring him in his creation. The beauty of the earth (*species terrae*) is a kind of silent voice, the voice of the dumb earth proclaiming its Creator.” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 74) Secondly, proving the existence of God by contingency as in Romans 1: 20, when “we judge external corporeal beauty we are necessarily driven to the conception of an immaterial standard by which we judge it. This internal standard we possess is, however, mutable, so that we are again driven to posit a beauty which is eternal and immutable... From the mutable nature of all things we must infer an immutable, eternal being on which their being depends. St. Augustine, however, is also arguing from the nature of beauty at the same time, merging both proofs by means of the particular meanings he makes his terms carry. This, as we have seen, was made possible by his conception of the relation between beauty and the formal principle which constitutes the being and intelligibility of things. Thus, by contemplating corporeal beauty, the mind is forced to turn in upon itself to find an even higher beauty. It cannot rest at this stage, however, and must go even further until it arrives at that uncreated beauty who created all the lower forms through which the mind had passed on its upward journey”. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 74-5)

⁴⁶ “The ladder of beauty was a recurrent motif in St. Augustine's thought and was fully developed in his early dialogue *De quantitate animae*, a work which Dante referred to in the letter to Can Grande for authority in his claim to having had a supernatural vision.” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, note 42, p. 193)

⁴⁷ For Dante “the world points to God, instructs him in God” (Brandeis, *The Ladder of Vision*, p. 198).

⁴⁸ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 69.

⁴⁹ Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 122.

⁵⁰ “Silence is where this enigmatic God of knowledge and love lives, who is promised to us in the life to come by the experience of the pilgrim, but presently denied to us by the poet's final renunciation of the attempt to describe Him; there also is where true Paradise begins. It is when the word ceases to be, beyond language and beyond poetry, that Dante the pilgrim, finally resolving the pull of opposite emotions, achieves his journey and intuitively attains the supreme joy of the Godhead; and it is an achievement that the poet cannot and does not articulate in words, for it is no longer a matter for poetry but for faith. The

the body reveals the characteristics of the divine (Romans 1:20) yet is knowable as it is physical, aspects of it are used as analogies whereby the unknowable and indescribable God may find expression.⁵¹

This use of analogy of attribution in the *Paradiso* is inseparable from analogy of proportionality which indicates that God's goodness and beauty are to God as human goodness and beauty are to man. God's goodness and beauty in the *Paradiso* are one with his essence whereas man's essence goodness and beauty are different things so that the goodness of God is determined by the nature of God while the goodness of man is appropriate to the nature of man. These two forms of analogy are inseparable in this context as the nature of God is that he is self-existent so that whatever perfection is attributed to him he not only embodies but is the source of, while Beatrice who as creature is dependent upon God, possesses beauty which according to her nature as a contingent being is contingent upon God.

For the reason of this connection between analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality, ladders of increasing beauty, goodness, truth and light in *Paradiso*⁵² which lure Dante towards God⁵³ are brought together at the highest point of the ascent in the unity of God in whom beauty, goodness, truth and existence are one with his essence. As not only physical beauty points towards eternal beauty as in Romans 1: 20, but also as

Paradise that Dante describes before the pilgrim reaches God tells the drama of approaching Him; but *Paradiso* as a poem is all, and can only be, on this side of that God; it is a preparation for and an approximation to a vision and a bliss that remain unsaid and unrevealed. And rightly so. For Dante knows that only when language pours itself out into silence is there union with God; and where there is no desire left to fulfil, he knows there is no language and no poetry." (Pertile, pp. 171-172)

⁵¹ "In fact the words, images and sounds of *Paradiso* as text are not presumed to be the Paradise experienced by the privileged pilgrim, but, paradoxically, only a non-representation of it. It is a non-representation not merely because it is limited by the natural defect of human language as such (this applies to the whole poem), but more especially because as a representation it is rendered inherently inadequate by the "*trasumanar*" ["passing beyond humanity"] (*Paradiso*, I. 70) which is now its object." (Pertile, pp. 145-146)

⁵² "We journey simultaneously through the ladder of love, the scale of being, and the hierarchy of all value rendered as light." (Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 115) Mazzeo traces the ladder of beauty showing a like pattern of influence. The increase in beauty which is represented as light lures Dante to ascend to God. Simultaneously as the beauty and light increase, so does his desire/love and understanding of truth/wisdom and being. In this way "the ladders of light, being, love, knowledge, and beauty are all actually fused; this fusion permits Dante to ascend to God as poet, lover, philosopher, and mystic seer all at once" (Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 117).

⁵³ "In the process of ascent, the emphasis is placed on love's demand for more light as beauty and knowledge, since vision is not yet complete and love must therefore demand and obtain more of the light which is beauty (XII, 31-32)." (Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 116; also see Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 83.)

God is embodied in Jesus even at the height of *Paradiso*, and the redeemed soul after judgment receives back his body so that the body is part of the redeemed state, this ascent is articulated through images of the body which increase in their beauty, goodness, love, truth and being according to their growing proportional nearness to God. For this reason love and the object of love, God, are reflected through the body, or the body-involving images particularly of Beatrice who, as Dante's angelic lady, is the "the meeting point between corporeal beauty and spiritual beauty in the hierarchy of incarnations of beauty leading to God".⁵⁴

Before discussing Beatrice's specific bodily images used analogically to articulate the divine, it is important to recognize that Beatrice "resembles, except for her greater translucence and beauty, the living Beatrice".⁵⁵ The individual Beatrice that Dante met in the *Vita Nuova* II, causing violent inner trembling in him as a youth, is physically the same form as the more mature, luminous and beautified Beatrice whom he meets in *Purgatorio* XXX and who through her increasing beauty and light leads him towards God in *Paradiso*. This distinguishes her from the other heavenly creatures whose appearances in Heaven have undergone radical change causing them at times to be unrecognizable from their earthly selves except through their enduring desire.⁵⁶ These, for Brandeis (p. 127), form a successive chain of appearances of increasing truth with each acting as a "symbolic mask" until the revelation of the last, after which he is "no longer capable of being deluded by what is delusive in the human form". In contrast Beatrice, while from the beginning suggesting "divine things; now she makes them manifest. Her beauty is uniquely a reflection of her spiritual being. The pilgrim loves her more with each increase of her beauty because with each he sees more clearly what she is".⁵⁷ This is so because from the *Vita Nuova* II Dante was inspired by the youthful purity of his love and by the God of Love to see her correctly. However on a different level Brandeis, referring to Aquinas' view of Adam and Christ as "perfectly embodied souls" being the direct

⁵⁴ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 83.

⁵⁵ Brandeis, p. 127.

⁵⁶ "The preservation of desire in the blessed allows him to portray them as individual characters, for without the psychological differences of individual desires all identities would necessarily merge and be lost. Which means, theologically speaking, that the achievement of beatitude does not entail the end of individual entities, but their fullest and freest realization." (Pertile, p. 155)

⁵⁷ Brandeis, p. 127.

handiwork of God, underlines Beatrice's continued analogous relationship to Christ throughout the *Commedia*⁵⁸ indicative of a "transcendent vision" and further demonstrating that in Beatrice there "had never been any discord between appearance and reality".⁵⁹ There may be an echo here of St. Bernard's view that "whatever external beauty there is in the human being—the beauty of his body—is simply a radiation from the luminous beauty of the soul",⁶⁰ a view which influenced *Convivio* III, viii in which the sensible beauty of the *donna angelica* reveals the beauty and goodness of her soul acting as a temporary taste of the divine.⁶¹ In this way Dante suggests "that an earthly thing may be perfect, and that it may be experienced in its perfection. And thus it expresses his ingrained sense of the world's redemption",⁶² underlining that the individual Beatrice, likened to the Christ becoming flesh, acted as a miracle in Dante's life leading him to God.⁶³

Although Beatrice does not radically change due to this accord between appearance and divine reality, the aspects in which her appearance does change relate to the intensification of beauty and light. This is apparent particularly through the alteration in images of the body relating to Beatrice and the heavenly souls which through the intensification of their beauty and light⁶⁴, itself determined by their proportional nearness to the divine, more fully articulate Beatrice's vision of God which increases the clarity of Dante's vision of her and in turn of God. God being the Supreme Light, the "*Prima Luce*"

⁵⁸ Brandeis, p. 127.

⁵⁹ Brandeis, p. 127.

⁶⁰ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 81.

⁶¹ In *Convivio* III, iii, "Beauty is an external light that makes manifest an internal splendor, an internal light. Dante then uses this principle to explain the beauty of a creature who is the highest perfection of her species. In such a person the soul is of such a high degree of goodness that its beauty is made to appear visibly in her body. Let us recall again that the soul of man is his *species*, the form which constitutes his being, and that this *species* is continually radiating or generating the *species* which is the object of the human faculty of apprehension. As St. Bonaventura said along with so many others, this *species* gives us pleasure as beauty and creates joy in him who apprehends it, a joy which resembles the joy existing in the Triune Creator. In a creature like the lady who is perfect in her *species*, the joy engendered is of such a high degree that it is a foretaste of the joys of paradise; the only difference between the joy of beholding such a creature and the joys of paradise are that the latter are perpetual." (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 81-82)

⁶² Brandeis, p. 127.

⁶³ "The Son of God was indeed the Son of Man. Flesh and the pure light are not inimical. And although Dante perceives the light to be more often than not blurred in the human creature, he knows it is there, capable of being apprehended and loved, capable of irradiating the obscurity of pilgrim eyes, and thus of leading towards God." (Brandeis, p. 127)

⁶⁴ With regard to one of the inhabitants of Heaven Dante writes, "How that light glowed and grew more beautiful from those few words of mine as it took on new happiness upon its happiness" (VIII, 46-8).

(*Paradiso* XXIX, 136)⁶⁵ which is essential truth⁶⁶ from which all creation emanates as reflections of this first light⁶⁷, is supremely beautiful. Like God, Beatrice's beauty and light, which are derived from God, extend beyond Dante's capacities in appropriate proportion leaving him not only without words but also lacking the ability to appreciate and conceive it.⁶⁸

These body-involving analogies involve images of the face, smile, eyes, music and dance. Images of Beatrice's face, whether as a whole, her eyes, or her smile, offer the principal lure by which Dante is led towards God and understands God who transcends his comprehension. Beatrice's smiling face functions as a lure whereby through her beauty she causes him to "[burn] more than ever to bring back [his] eyes to her" (*Paradiso*, XXVII, 97-99) and which takes possession of his mind in a way incomparable with anything experienced in ordinary reality.⁶⁹ Yet this is not a carnal desire as such. The vision of Beatrice's face produced in Dante the virtues which led him from a carnal oriented form of *eros*, physical desire, to *caritas* as shown when he writes, "the virtue that her look granted me drew me forth from the fair nest of Leda and thrust me into the swiftest of the heavens." (*Paradiso*, XXVII, 88-100) "The beauty of the smiling lips appeals to the eyes, not that they may be fed as if vision were like the sense of taste, but rather that it may elicit love, a love which is a special case of universal love, helping to initiate a process which begins in a vision of beauty and ends in a vision of paradise."⁷⁰

⁶⁵ In XXXIII, God is also referred to as *somma luce*, 67; *luce eterna*, 83 and 124; *eterno lume*, 43, as noted by Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, pp. 110-111. Dante like "St. Augustine adopted the famous platonic metaphor of the Good as the sun of the intelligible world, a metaphor widely used by both pagan neoplatonists and Christian fathers. It is largely through his influence that the platonic interpretations of the sun symbol became widely diffused among medieval thinkers" (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 143-4) and reached Dante.

⁶⁶ *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 52-54, see Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, pp. 110-111.

⁶⁷ Pertile, p. 164 and *Paradiso* XXXIII.

⁶⁸ "The beauty I saw there goes far beyond mortal reach; I think that only He Who made it knows the full joy of its being. At this point I admit to my defeat: no poet, comic or tragic, ever was more outdone by his theme than I am now; for, as sunlight does to the weakest eyes, so did the mere thought of her lovely smile strike every recognition from my mind. From the first day that I beheld her face in this life till the vision of her now, I could trust in my poems to sing her praise, but now I must stop trying to pursue her beauty in my verse, for I have done as much as any artist at his best." (*Paradiso*, XXX, 19-33; also see *Purgatorio* XXXI 139-145)

⁶⁹ "If nature or art have made baits to take the eyes so as to possess the mind, in human flesh or in its portraiture, all these together would seem nothing besides the divine delight that shone on me when I turned to her smiling face." (*Paradiso*, XXVII, 88-96)

⁷⁰ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 83.

Throughout the *Paradiso*, Dante expresses the incomprehensible delight he feels when his “eyes were feeding on that blessed face” (*Paradiso*, XXI, 19-21) whereby with St. Bernard he sees physical beauty as being a foretaste of the delights of heaven. This is demonstrated through images of the eyes and mouth as when Dante writes, “I was amazed, for within her eyes glowed such a smile that I thought I touched with mine the depth of my grace and of my paradise” (*Paradiso*, XV, 33-6). Through Beatrice’s smile reflected in his own eyes he experiences the ultimate end of his own desire/*eros* and his own paradise.

This taste of heaven comes from the fact that Beatrice’s smile reflects God’s joy, as shown when Dante writes, “She who saw my desire, began, smiling with such gladness that in her face seemed to be God’s own joy” (*Paradiso*, XXVII, 103). Awareness of the divine light, God, causes the soul to rejoice because of this internally perceived light which produces the external light, the smile, which with the eyes are the most beautiful spiritual parts of the body.⁷¹ This external light acts as a taste of Paradise luring the pilgrim to God through producing “in Dante’s mind the implied ‘interior light’, a shining of the eternal light of truth (*Paradiso*, V, 79)”.⁷²

As they reflect God, Beatrice’s face, eyes and mouth function as a lure through their increasing beauty caused by her closer proximity to God causing them to ascend towards God. Beatrice’s “lovely eyes” her “vivid crowning beauties⁷³ grow in strength the higher they ascend”. This produces in Dante a “sacred joy” which “grows in perfection as we rise” (*Paradiso*, XIV, 127-139). Dante expresses the indescribable

⁷¹ “Dante’s doctrine of the internal and external lights of beauty is made clearer in his discussion of the beauty of the smile of this angelic lady. Her soul reveals itself through the mouth as color through glass and what is the smile or laughter but a coruscation of the soul’s joy, an external light which is an image of the internal light? Indeed, man is called a divine animal by the philosophers precisely because the rational soul is so spiritual, so free from, or superior to, the sheer potentiality which is matter that the divine light, the ultimate source of the splendor of the soul, can shine through it. Dante thus mingles the Augustinian notion of beauty as the translation through sensible particulars of the informing principle with the conception of light as the principle of beauty. The same *species* which is the principle of knowledge, being, and beauty is itself a kind of light, for the metaphysicians of light conceived of *lux* as the principle of being, knowledge, and beauty. It therefore follows that the most beautiful parts of the body are those in which the soul, the divine light, is most active—the eyes and the mouth, balconies looking in upon the dwelling places of the soul.” (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 82)

⁷² See also Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 78-9 for the debate concerning light as real or intellectual.

⁷³ “The lure of beauty for the eyes and the eyes themselves as the most beautiful of bodily parts run as a unifying thread through Dante’s works from the first visions of the *Vita Nuova* to the final visions of the *Paradiso*.” (Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, p. 127)

beauty of “the song those splendours sang”, “jewels too precious and too rich to be brought back to Earth from out that realm”, which leave him “tongueless”.⁷⁴

Beatrice’s face, by reflecting the light of God, causes Dante to change from within and enables him to ascend.

I saw Beatrice...looking at the sun... [and through her] I fixed my eyes on the sun [whereby it seemed] as if He that is able had decked the sky with a second sun. Beatrice stood with her eyes fixed only on the eternal wheels, and on her I fixed mine, withdrawn from above. At her aspect I was changed within...The passing beyond humanity cannot be set forth in words; let the example suffice, therefore, for him to whom grace reserves the experience. If I was only that part of me which Thou createdst last, Thou knowest, Love that rulest the heavens, who with Thy light didst raise me. (*Paradiso* I, lines 46-75)

Through looking into Beatrice’s face not only does Dante see the sun, God’s light, reflected but it seems as if she, illuminated within by the love of God, becomes a second sun through the light she received from God. Upon taking in this vision of light, Dante is likewise illuminated from within. This filling with light causes him to pass beyond humanity and rise towards God. Therein the image of Beatrice’s face reflecting God and exemplifying *caritas* for God, produces *caritas* in Dante changing him from within causing him to ascend towards God who is *Caritas*.

Likewise images of dance and music, while rooted in physical experience, are used analogically to express the indescribable state of bliss resulting from this vision of God. Dance represents a higher state of bliss, the participation in God as shown when Beatrice becomes “silent, and it seemed her thoughts were drawn to something else, for she had joined the dancing wheel where she had been before” (*Paradiso*, IX, 64-66). In her mind, she had returned to a state of the contemplation of God, the bliss of which is described as a dance, the dancing wheel being the unifying bliss which she shares with the other inhabitants of heaven.

Like the gradations of Beatrice’s beauty and light, the speed of the souls dancing reveals the level of their ecstasy or bliss, their proximity to God and therefore in a sense their ontological level. “Just so those whirling wheels by differently dancing, through their movement, fast or slow, revealed to me the measure of their bliss. (*Paradiso*, XXIV,

⁷⁴ See also *Paradiso*, XII, 4-6.

19-27) Dante expresses this more clearly when he writes, “I saw lights revolving in that light, their movements slow or swift, each, I suppose, according to how clearly it sees God” (*Paradiso*, VIII, 19-21). It is the clarity of the vision of God which determines the souls’ measure of bliss which is reflected by the speed of their rotations. Thus the spinning revealed inexpressible and indescribable radiance, joy and brightness which is derived from seeing God, from the heavenly Light. “From one that spun so radiant with joy, no greater brightness danced within the sphere; three times it circled Beatrice’s soul accompanied by music so divine my memory cannot recapture it, and so, my pen skips over such detail—not fantasy nor words are good enough to paint the subtle floods of Heaven’s light.” (*Paradiso*, XXIV, 19-27)

Yet regardless of the heavenly inexpressible nature of these images of dance and music, Dante roots them in lived bodily experience as when he writes, “When singing, circling, all those blazing suns had wheeled around the two of us three times like stars that circle close to the fixed poles, they stopped like ladies still in dancing mood, who pause in silence listening to catch the rhythm of the new notes of the dance” (*Paradiso*, X, 70-81). This life-likeness he also captures in lines 19-24 when he writes, “As partners in a dance whirl in their reel, caught in a sudden surge of joy, will often quicken their steps and raise their voices high, so at her eager and devout request the holy circles showed new happiness through their miraculous music and their dance” (*Paradiso*, XIV, 19-24). Thus through the analogies of dance and music Dante suggests heavenly states which extend beyond the comprehensible and describable.

And in so doing these analogies of dance and music enable the pilgrim and poet to transcend the physical towards God. This is shown when the poet writes, “This music raised my soul to heights of love: until that moment nothing had existed that ever bound my soul in such sweet chains” (*Paradiso*, XIV, 127-139). The beauty of the music which transcends the human experience of music also has the power to lift the soul, binding it with sweet chains through filling it with love; hence it is lifted through emotion and feeling towards God. As we saw with Beatrice’s face, smile and eyes, so we see with music and dance. While these analogies concerning Beatrice and the heavenly beings express heavenly *eros*, the ascent towards the divine through love, and reflect aspects of

God, the divine itself can only be understood in analogical terms, as God is beyond description and comprehension.

As we have seen, one of the primary challenges in the *Paradiso* is the representation of God who is beyond understanding and representation, hence the representation of the unrepresentable. In order to solve this problem, Dante resorts to analogy. Dante uses body-involving imagery first because Christ is God incarnate, second as the body forms an integral part of the redeemed soul after judgment, and third because God's nature is revealed through his creation. In this latter point lies the basis and justification for Dante's use of analogy, analogy of attribution which as we have seen is connected to analogy of proportionality in the *Paradiso*. Beatrice the individual acts as a lure for Dante. Beatrice, retaining her individuality both inside and outside, due to an accord between appearance and reality, remains physically the same throughout Dante's works. However, through the increasing beauty and luminosity of her face, eyes and smile, she does nevertheless change revealing the intensity of her love for and proximity to God and therefore indirectly aspects of the divine. This is further shown through body-involving analogies concerning music and dance. These images concerning Beatrice and the other heavenly beings cause desire through presenting Dante with a foretaste of heaven in that they reflect God's light, beauty, joy and therefore his being. In so doing they function as a lure illuminating Dante and causing him to change within. This vision of God produces a state of bliss articulated through the analogies of Beatrice's eyes and smile, together with music and dance, which remain rooted in physical reality while describing the indescribable and incomprehensible. In this way through making the divine accessible through analogy, as the divine can only be understood through analogy, the pilgrim and reader are led beyond the physical towards an awareness of Dante's understanding of love and his conception of God through the figure of Beatrice.

Having completed our discussion of Dante, we shall now turn back to the beginning in order both to trace our analysis of love as a historical progression illuminating Plato's influence upon Dante, and to consider what the various phases of this progression reveal about the dynamics and potentialities of love.

1. A PATH FROM *EROS* TO *CARITAS*

In the myth of the Birth of *Eros* when Plato through Diotima describes *Eros* as the child of *Poros* and *Penia*, complexities arise. As we discussed in Chapter 1, *Poros* has at least three meanings. The first meaning, evident in the myth itself is "cunning resourcefulness", *Poros* being the child of *Metis*. The second meaning is "path or way through" and the third, a reinterpretation emerging from Plotinus onward, refers to the downpouring of "resource, wealth or possession". This later meaning is problematic in that on some level it is in tension with the first meaning of *poros*, though it is connected to and a reinterpretation of the second. In contrast to *poros*, *penia* meaning lack or poverty, that which is *aporos*, without way, remains relatively consistent over time, being often associated with matter and therefore at times the carnal aspect of love. Given that this latter term remains consistent by comparison with *poros*, in order to understand the changes in *eros* over time we overall focused upon the meanings of the term *poros*.

We demonstrated how *Eros* as the child of *Penia* and *Poros*, sharing the natures of both, is forever both lacking and possessing, and how in Socratic terms *eros* is thereby similar/analogous to the *aporia* of knowledge of the philosopher, knowing nothing but knowing enough of the truth to be conscious that he knows nothing so that the lover of wisdom is therefore always desiring to know without ultimate satisfaction.

In this context we contrasted *Poros* the son of *Metis* or Cunning in the myth with the wise (204a), good, beautiful and happy gods who possess a different type of wisdom. In doing so we discussed how Plato seems to critique the tendency in antiquity to associate gods with non-divine worldly qualities therein pointing to the possibility of a

purser, more-divine conception of the divine, a point underlined in that *Poros* and *Penia* through their actions each undermine what they personify. In this way, the seeds of the third conception of *Poros* may be read as implicit within the *Symposium*. Given that the beauty, goodness and *eudaimonia* of the gods suggest *Poros* as plenty wealth and possession, Plotinus' view seems a conflation of *Poros* as cunning with the wisdom of the gods of 204a whereby *Poros* makes a new turn, which then becomes integrated into and a linguistic resource for the Christian tradition. This pointing to a higher conception of the divine in turn points to a purer and higher form of *eros* directed beyond the physical, which is both Diotima's project and the subject of this thesis.

Turning to the myth's description of *Eros*, we demonstrated how the philosopher Socrates of the *Symposium* may be read as personifying *Eros*, having the characteristics of both *Penia* and *Poros*. We examined the correspondence between *Eros* and Socrates as intermediaries between wisdom and ignorance and mortality and immortality, and how in him is articulated the interconnection of *eros* and philosophy, he being the ideal Platonic lover and philosopher. Therein he embodies all the characteristics of *Poros* according to the first definition of cunning and the second definition of pathway, having the resourcefulness to find a pathway through his *aporia* of knowledge, his lack of pathway. This resourcefulness takes the form of mental rational technique though in making this pathway he uncovers increasingly more problems, so the wisdom he has is constantly slipping away. This continued presence of the *penia* element maintains a certain dominance regardless of his efforts to overcome it, showing Socrates to exemplify the path of *penia*. Nonetheless this philosophical notion of *eros* transcends the physical, functioning as a pathway or *poros* towards truth showing his concern for the well-being of the soul.

We further examined the role of Socrates as intermediary through an analysis of the relation between Diotima's revelation of the beautiful and the arrival of Alcibiades, representing the opposition of abstract reality *versus* symbolic representation. This opposition functions on three levels. On the first level, though for Diotima the lover's ultimate goal is immortality through the procreation of virtue, it is brought about through the pursuit of the form of the beautiful as love object, which is here opposed to Alcibiades as the finite reflection of the beautiful, the highest rung on the ascent to the

beautiful contrasted with the lowest. As love is determined by its object this denotes a difference in type of *eros*, heavenly and earthly Aphrodite; a *poros*-dominant form of *eros*, *eros* directed towards the forms seeking immortality through the procreation of virtue, hence the well-being of the soul, as opposed to a *penia*-dominant form of *eros* directed towards physical beauty, the body, hence appetitive desire which when not controlled by reason becomes detrimental to the soul. On the second level, Socrates and Alcibiades display conflicting types of *eros* as shown through Plato's use of Apollonian and Dionysian elements which articulates the tension between them. Socrates seeking the well-being of the soul is trying to lead Alcibiades away from the physical to the good in order to procreate *arête* while Alcibiades incompatibly is trying physically to seduce Socrates to learn what he knows, his *logoi*. This tension relates to the third level where Socrates and Alcibiades may be seen as opposing each other with regard to their understanding of love of the individual. Alcibiades' conception involves a slavish devotion/ fixation upon the individual. In general governed by the lower aspects of the soul, though he loves Socrates predominantly for his philosophical *logoi*, Alcibiades is torn between his love for these *logoi* and his desire for fame, both of which are based upon self-interest. In contrast, Socrates represents a more workable notion of love of the individual in that he seeks the well-being of the souls of both himself and others, striving to procreate *arête* in order to attain permanent ethical perfection and perfection of understanding. Socrates effectively plays out the role of philosophical *Eros* who, seeking the beautiful beyond the physical, returns to help others to ascend to this vision. In this way he effectively acts as a *daimon* mediating between man and the heavens, showing the demise of Alcibiades to be the latter's own fault.

In order better to understand Socrates' methodology in aiding others with regard to their souls, we discussed the relationship of *eros* and irony. Still focusing upon the *Symposium*, we explored various types of irony. The traditional form of irony separates essence from existence which allows for the progressive unveiling of essence. Socratic irony, which is generally the inverse, is the calling of apparent knowledge into question through rational dialogue to reveal a genuine underlying emptiness, ignorance or *penia*. Though Kierkegaard views Socrates as ironist sadistically reducing others to ignorance, Socrates seeks the well-being of others while maintaining a slight ironic aloofness to

create a *caesura* to get others to think for themselves, calling on their own inner resources rather than giving them a formula for the truth, though remaining close at hand guiding their path through questions as opposed to answers. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard is correct in seeing that Socrates' irony clears away false belief of others which opens the way for reflective thought. Though pointing to personal ignorance (*penia*), which is at the heart of Socratic irony, this lack once acknowledged points beyond itself, emphasizing not only what one lacks, whether understanding or *arête*, but the capacity of rational engagement to provide a way (*poros*) through the *aporia* making possible the pursuit and gradual acquisition of *arête* and understanding. In this way Socrates' *penia*-dominant tendency therefore points to the *poros* element in philosophical *eros*.

The third and all-encompassing form of irony that we discussed was Platonic irony. Plato presupposed fullness in that each element in the dialogue is meaningful. Though Plato is not represented directly, for Platonic irony involves the manipulation of all elements in a dialogue to convey a common end, he strives to make the readers reflect for themselves enabling them to pursue and procreate *arête*, hence seeking the well-being of their souls and immortality. Given the presuppositions of Greek virtue-based ethics, this is no doubt inseparable from a quest for ethical self-perfection. This irony focuses on the *poros*-dominant tendency in *eros* in that it seeks to find a pathway through the reader's lack which is Plato's overall project. In this way irony is a means to demonstrate love through allowing the other or others to think for themselves, discover themselves and be themselves. In order to better understand Platonic irony and its relation to *eros* we turned to the *Phaedrus*, focusing upon the recantation and its relation to the text as a whole.

In the *Phaedrus* the central *aporia* is the recantation; in this context we examined Plato's understanding of *eros* and *aporia* which Plato deploys ultimately to the end of *poros* (pathway). This recantation as to whether *Eros* is good and a god is simultaneously the matrix and *aporia* of meaning. Clearly stressing the ambiguity of *eros*, it creates a site of meaning through which the various speeches are reinterpreted and weighed against one another, and at the same time it creates a lack of meaning and *aporia* thereby leaving meaning in flux and open to reinterpretation. We then looked at Nussbaum's reading emphasizing the aporetic nature of the recantation as indicating a change in Plato's

thought. Having transcended the dichotomy of *sophrosune* and *mania* set out in the *Symposium*, *eros* from the *Phaedrus* onward is viewed as a constitutive element of an orderly and pious life, indicating what Nussbaum perceives to be the attribution of a new higher value to love of the individual than in the middle dialogues which, as we demonstrated, was inaccurate. Contrasting with Nussbaum's understanding of the recantation as pointing to a radical change in Plato's view of interpersonal love, Hackforth closely reads the sequence of speeches in the *Phaedrus* as a gradual uncovering of the truth concerning *eros* which is represented in Socrates' second speech. In this speech the soul turns from the world through love of the individual towards virtue and the forms which govern that relationship. This represents a turning from a utilitarian callous lust to a more virtuous love, from uncontrolled selfish *eros* to a more selfless love. *Eros* remains the same in itself but is defined by its object so the value of the love is defined by the end it seeks to achieve. However Hackforth's reading does not take into account the fact that, regardless of the sincerity of the sequential unveiling, Plato inserts an *aporia* into the form of the recantation which undercuts meaning, thereby suggesting the possibility that none of the mentioned uses of *eros* are to be taken as the "truth". In this way the aporetic structures undermine both Hackforth's and Nussbaum's readings.

This suggested that within the framework of the *Phaedrus* exemplifying Platonic *eros*, Plato uses the recantation which is an *aporetic* structure as a tool of education to stimulate philosophical reflection, both in the listener and reader, so that the dialogues act not only as on some level an endorsement of writing but as an invitation and introduction to philosophical reflection. This is underlined by Plato's consistent support of *anamnesis* achieved through dialectic, which seems to be the one element which survives the *aporia* of the recantation. Irony in that it causes others to reflect for themselves and draw on their own resources facilitates *anamnesis* whereby, for Plato, true understanding can be achieved. For this reason Platonic irony, under which we may here subsume Socratic irony, functions as a means by which others are led along the path towards true *arête* and understanding.

Through this analysis of the recantation we uncovered a nested set of irony. Hackforth's understanding of unveiling irony is undermined by Socrates' *aporia*, itself a use of irony. Socratic irony is undermined by Plato's irony which provokes philosophical

reflection to achieve the well-being of the soul through *anamnesis* which acts as a *poros* beyond the limits of the present, itself presupposing a heteronomous (though internalized) system hence a speculative faith in fullness. These forms of irony, each extending beyond the last, form a “path” or *poros* of irony out of the *aporia* of Socrates, showing that overall Plato uses irony to exemplify a *poros*-dominant form or tendency in *eros* in that it acts as a means to stimulate philosophical reflection whereby the individual may gain access to the truth, increasing in virtue and understanding. In this way *eros* and irony are inseparable in the *Phaedrus* given that for Plato irony is one of the ways in which love for others is shown.

Eros, as revealed through this discussion of Plato’s conception of love, is now seen to possess two strands, *penia* and *poros*. The *penia*-dominant tendency in *eros* emphasizing lack, related both to uncontrolled physical *eros* and, at an intellectual level, to ignorance as displayed through Socratic irony. The *poros*-dominant tendency, as we have just seen, is displayed through Platonic irony. Both Socratic and Platonic irony represent means by which Plato seeks to beget virtue in others, including the reader, seeking to enable them to reflect for themselves so that as opposed to *poros* as cunning, in the Platonic project *poros* represents a pathway through the lack of virtue and *aporia* of knowledge, the facilitation of which for Plato is a great gesture of love. This *poros*-dominant strand which seeks the well-being of the other, is indicative of a relatively selfless element in philosophical *eros* (though the selflessness is of course qualified by the ideal of self-perfection), which shows *eros* to be more complex than Nygren suggests.

As we discussed in Chapter I, while the meaning of the *penia* element in *Eros* remains relatively consistent, signifying lack, we have explored thus far two meanings of *poros*, cunning or pathway. From Plotinus onward *poros* takes on the very different meaning of possession, resource and wealth. For Plotinus, *poros* is the down-pouring of Reason Principles from the One to creation so that the individual receives this wealth through turning upward and contemplating the One. While being in tension with the conception of *poros* as resourcefulness, this third meaning (wealth) seems connected to the second (pathway) in that through contemplating the One, receiving the wealth of the Reason Principles, the pathway is opened whereby the individual can return to the One freeing them from the *penia* and *aporia* of the world. This third meaning of *poros* became

integrated into and provided a linguistic resource for the Christian tradition; in Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Ambrose God is the true *Poros*, Resource or Wealth, which pours down on creation in the form of his *Logos*, Grace and the Holy Spirit, expressive of the selfless love of God for his creation, opening the Way mankind can return to him, the return involving *eros* in so far as it is necessary to recognize lack and need of God to desire him. Yet a return is impossible without God's intervention, his agapic loving of man which motivates man's love for him, allowing him to return.

Nygren in his judgement of *eros* as self-love seems not to have taken into account the double nature of *eros*, having paid less attention to the *poros* strand of *eros*, nor its diverse meanings interpreted differently over time. For this reason Nygren did not fully appreciate the progression from Plato through Plotinus to Augustine which marks the gradual reinterpretation of the *poros* element in *eros* until it is seen as transformed through God's grace, its encounter with *agape* into what Augustine calls *caritas*.¹

In this process the crucial difference between the Platonic conceptions of love and those of Plotinus, Augustine and Dante is that, unlike the Platonic view which is a self-willed movement upward, love for the latter three involves a downward movement from creator, the One or God, towards creation, hence it is God's love, not our own. In this context, rather than the nature or value of love being determined by its object as in Platonism, in Christianity it is God who is Love who determines the value of his object, creation, hence us. Here lies the central difference between *eros* and *agape*, Platonic love and Christian love.

Furthermore, though some have seen this selfless love in Plotinus as the same as Christian *caritas*, it is not quite identical. Plotinus' *poros*-dominant *eros*, though seemingly selfless in that it is an outpouring of the One who is *Eros*, is different from Christian *agape* which is more truly selfless, the true *Poros*, God as *Agape*. We must for a moment return to Plato. For him, *eros* is always the same yet is defined by its object, whether directed towards a carnal or spiritual object, and is therefore earthly *eros* or heavenly *eros*. Though heavenly *eros*, which emphasizes *poros* as pathway, is directed towards virtue, nonetheless this does not make it *agape*, God's selfless love for mankind.

¹ See Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book I, vii, 18. "I mean by charity that affection of the mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and one's neighbour in subordination to God".

Augustine rightly states that in the Christian understanding God's love and grace is in part expressed in that he puts in our hearts a desire to seek him, a moment when *agape* motivates heavenly *eros*, explaining why Nygren says that Augustine's understanding of *caritas* involves the coming together or merging of *eros* as he understood it from Neo-Platonism and *agape*. Nonetheless, the two remain distinct. Heavenly *eros* must be converted through a Biblical conversion and therefore receive God's grace and *agape* at which point Heavenly *eros* is transformed into *agape*, or according to Augustine who spoke no Greek, *caritas*, the Latin term avoiding the "colourless" neutrality and lack of intensity and warmth of *agape*. In this sense the *poros* strand of Heavenly *eros*, through its encounter with God's love, *agape* which is the true *Poros* (Resource or Wealth), is converted into what both Augustine and Dante understood as *caritas* which is likewise a form of *poros* (passage) to God. This addition of *agape* shows *caritas* to be the *telos* of the *eros* tradition, but a significantly different and higher form of love from Platonic *eros* given its contact with, and subsequent transformation through, *agape*.

In this gradual transformation of *eros*, though emphasis has been placed on different understandings of the term *poros*, we must take into account *penia* as well. This progression may be read as a movement from lack or *penia*-centered love, focused on lack, to a *poros*-centred love focused on fullness, further interpreted as a movement from a self-love to a truly selfless love. If seen according to a Christian reading, this parallels and might by the incautious be equated with the movement from carnal pleasure-based love through love of virtue to love of God. *Penia*, while meaning lack or poverty, is associated with the indeterminate and matter, and even in the myth of the birth of *Eros* has a carnal element, hence earthly *eros* as mentioned in the first section of Chapter III. However the aspect of *penia* focused upon in our discussion of the *penia*-tendency in *eros* is the intellectual meaning, Socrates' use of lack which reduces others to ignorance deflating false knowledge in order to open a path towards truth, as distinct from physically seducing them. Nonetheless the *penia/poros* opposition influencing Christian thought tends to re-align with the heavenly and earthly *eros* distinction, focusing upon the opposition of the body versus the soul as evil versus good, mortal versus immortal, poverty versus wealth as conceived from Plotinus onward, simply expressed as *fol amor* versus *fin amor*. Given this opposition within the Christian tradition, this movement

involving the transition from *penia*-dominant earthly *eros* to *poros*-dominant Heavenly *eros* to *caritas* is perhaps most fascinatingly articulated by Dante in his *Commedia*.

In light of this passage of and transformation in *eros* from the Platonic to the Christian traditions which is exemplified in the poetry of Dante, we took account in Part 2 of two means through which a Platonic influence may have arrived at Dante, a poet emerging from the Christian tradition of the Middle Ages, greatly influenced by Platonic culture. The first, the philosophical approach, traces the passage of Platonic ideas concerning love from Plato through Plotinus to Augustine. Through Augustine and many other Neo-Platonic Christian thinkers, this notion of *eros* entered the monastic schools and medieval culture, informing Dante's conceptions of *amor* and *caritas* as expressed in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*. The second approach, which concerns the literary tradition, involves the emergence of Platonic discussion concerning love's ambiguity and the lover's desire for wholeness with the beloved in Ovid, which informed the tradition of courtly love in which the opposition of *fol amor* and *fin amor* echoed earthly and heavenly *eros*, which was perhaps also subject to the influence of Neo-Platonic ideas upon the Troubadours independent of Ovid. Evident particularly through Christianity's conflict with courtly love, Platonic influences surfaced in part, though without reference to Socrates' Palinode, through the poetics of recantation. Among the Troubadour poets debates emerged concerned with the ambiguity of love, with their poetry of recantation influencing the Sicilian and Tuscan schools and through them the *Dolce Stil Nuova*. As a member of the *Dolce Stil Nuova*, Dante was concerned with positive and negative forms of love, articulated in the opposition of *amor* versus *caritas*, which subtly though decisively deviates from the dichotomy of earthly and heavenly *eros*.

Within this framework, and articulating this transformation of *eros*, in Part 3 we examined Francesca as Dante's most eloquent articulation of courtly love, *amor*. First we explored how Dante likens Francesca to earthly Venus in the "Venus of Rimini", embodying earthly *eros*. Through using the myth of Venus and Mars to articulate her very similar relationship to Paolo, Dante simultaneously ennoble her through pagan myth and debases/condemns her through Christianity. This condemnation is continued in the next chapter, "Falling for Francesca", a full analysis of *Inferno* V, in which we saw that while Dante identifies Francesca with earthly Venus he is simultaneously, as if on

the opposite side of the coin, condemning her according to the Christian tradition as an Eve figure, a trap into which both Paolo and Dante the pilgrim fall. By identifying her as a trap/snare (reminiscent of the net of Vulcan), she is demonstrated to be an aporetic figure, who through her *penia* causes others to fall and be caught forever in the *aporia* of Hell. This in turn expresses Dante's condemnation of courtly love as aporetic, which through its conflict with and parody of Christianity leads its followers astray through causing them to follow *Amor* and their carnal pleasure hence their self-love, as opposed to the Christian God who is *Caritas*, resulting in their condemnation.

When considered in terms of Plato's notion of *eros*, Francesca resembles the uncontrolled *eros* of the tyrant who has not re-channelled her desire through *sophrosune* towards the good, beautiful and true. The point which is renegotiated here however is the notion of *aporia*. When seen with regard to Socrates' technique, we discussed the deflation of false wisdom to an *aporia* in order to begin the pursuit of true knowledge. Not evil in itself, the use of *aporia* as exemplified by Plato when handled properly became a tool to stimulate reflective thought, provided the student did not remain trapped in the *aporia* but through faith in a fullness accessible through *anamnesis* climbed out of the pit. However, Dante's use of the *aporia* of *eros* seems purely negative, the inescapable trap of Hell which, accurately seen, misses the subtlety of the relation of *eros* and *aporia* in Plato but in a black/white way exemplifies Christianity's critique and judgment of pagan thought, though apparently not being fully conscious of its subtleties and of the shifts which occurred in its appropriation and integration into the thought of Medieval Europe.

Furthermore, Francesca's seduction echoes Plato's use of irony which formed an intricate and complex structure to seduce students to philosophy and provoke philosophical reflection. As with the poetics of recantation, there appears to be no direct Platonic influence, but the fact that Dante is drawn to a parallel structure is instructive about the potentialities for representation of their related concepts of love. Francesca is the site of irony in so far as she indicates the splitting away of the good from the beautiful showing that appearances are deceiving. Though Francesca on the surface is ideally beautiful, a *donna angelica* who should lead Dante to God, she is morally questionable and condemnable for *lussuria* and by this sin she seduces and infects Paolo and Dante

leading them astray. This in turn indicates Dante's negative implementation of the Socratic *aporia* and therefore his ironic judgment on the seemingly beautiful/appearance as being in opposition to the good. However as Dante maintained a distance or *caesura*, demonstrated by his ability to reason and draw Francesca into question, the irony of her seduction, which produced a trap echoing Socratic irony, was undermined by a form of Platonic irony resulting in Dante's rational reflection and change. Thus though on a significantly simpler scale than in Platonic dialogues, we find analogues of Plato's use of irony in Francesca's seduction of Paolo; with regard to Socratic irony through being stuck in an *aporia* through presupposing lack, showing its ultimately destructive ends, and with Platonic irony through reflective thought having presupposed a fullness of God and Beatrice which ultimately enables him to escape Francesca's *aporia* of passion/compassion.

From Francesca as earthly *eros/concupiditas*, drawing upon both pagan and Christian sources, we turned to Beatrice's rebuke which acted as Dante's recantation of his falling for Francesca, his repentance of *amor* in favour of *caritas*. In *Purgatorio* XXX, Dante represents Beatrice as Heavenly Venus through a correlation with Venus' rebuke of Aeneas in *Aeneid* I. However this correlation ends when, in the manner in which in courtly love *fin amor* degenerates to *fol amor*, Venus sends Aeneas off to Dido. Given from a Christian point of view this tragic sinful experience (though the experience ultimately contributes to making Aeneas into the hero he becomes), Dante extends his conception of love beyond that conceivable by the pre-Christian Virgil. Beatrice is from God, an expression of God's grace and love for Dante which further suggests the subsequent transforming of Heavenly *eros* into *caritas*. Beatrice, a Christ-like figure, represents the Word of God, who in contrast to the deception of the Venus of the *Aeneid* tells Dante the truth, however harshly, causing him to face his sins, and oversees his full biblical conversion according to the pattern of Act 2: 36-41. After his conversion, Dante recognizes Beatrice to be *Sapientia*, Divine wisdom, which when unveiled is Revelation, ultimately leading Dante to God therefore acting as the new redeemed Eve. Thus in both Beatrice's pagan role as Heavenly Venus and her Christian roles as a Christ-like figure and new Eve-figure, she acts as a *poros* (pathway). In this way the pagan *poros* of Heavenly *eros* is subsumed by the greater *poros* of Christian *caritas* and thereby enacts

the conversion of Heavenly *eros* into *caritas*. The means by which this occurs is Beatrice, an expression of God's grace and *agape*, here resembling the third meaning of *poros* as the down pouring wealth, possession or resource from Heaven. The status of these figures and images was considered through a discussion of Beatrice and analogy. Beatrice, sent by God to aid Dante and lead/lure him back to God through what we earlier described as "the coming together of her beauty and his Word", for Dante embodies the merging of Heavenly *eros* and *agape*.

In contrast to Francesca seen as *aporia*, lack of passage, Beatrice is Dante's passage way or *poros* to God. Resembling more the use of *aporiai* by Plato in the *Phaedrus* discussed with regard to Platonic irony, the rebuke or deflation of Dante by Beatrice is a tool, the means by which he will truly and deeply repent and change. Given that Christianity presupposes fullness, God as good, beautiful and true, only through a deflation of false knowledge, producing a temporary emptiness and *penia*, is the pilgrim led to a wholehearted pursuit of righteousness. Thus though the *Commedia* seems to present the descent into Hell as an *aporia* and the ascent out of Hell to Heaven as *poros*, as in Plato's *Phaedrus* the deflation of false knowledge into *aporia* is a tool to cause the pilgrim to change and pursue truth.

Furthermore, in terms of love of the individual, Francesca embodies carnal uncontrolled *eros* in contrast to Beatrice who embodies *caritas*. Dante is personally interacting with both women, one a temptress and the other a saviour, one an aporetic figure seen as evil and the other a *poros* leading to the good. As an aporetic figure Francesca blocks Dante from God. As a saviour and *poros* Beatrice leads Dante to God. Thus interpersonal love relationships in Dante can be destructive or constructive, like *eros* determined by the object on which it is focused (though ultimately, as we have seen, the *agape* element in *caritas* is a gift of God which itself determines the worth of its object). If a relationship is destructive involving a permanent fixation upon the individual, the beloved must be abandoned as in Diotima's speech in favour of the form of the beautiful, or as in the case of Dante Francesca must be abandoned in pursuit of God, a requirement which Paolo failed to accept. However if the relationship causes the lover, as in the *Phaedrus*, to envisage and pursue beauty and goodness, which in the *Commedia* is God, to which the beloved remains subordinate, then like the lovers of

Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus*, the love relationship contributes to and is an integral part of the pursuit of virtue, enabling the lovers to ascend together towards the Good, Beautiful and True. This latter relationship is exemplified vividly by the interaction between Dante and Beatrice as they ascend through Heaven, Beatrice feeding the love of God to Dante through her mouth and eyes. In this case the beloved is an integral part of a dialectic of desire which transcends earthly attraction in a spiritual movement towards God, here exemplified through Beatrice's aid of Dante whereby Heavenly *eros* is converted into *caritas*. In this way, Beatrice enacts the reconciliation of the reverence of woman of courtly love with Christianity, and is thereby a *poros* out of the conflict between courtly love and the Christian faith.

Representing these ways informed by *poros* and *penia*,² as we have seen, while Francesca represents *penia* and acts as an *aporia* (lack of way) in the path of Dante, Beatrice represents *poros* as in downpouring resource, wealth from God³ and *poros*, a way or pathway by which Dante may return to God.⁴ Francesca representing earthly Aphrodite and Eve in two-fold manner represents earthly *eros/concupiscentia*,⁵ or lust, resulting in her damnation. Beatrice is presented as a *poros* figure, Dante's way or passage to God figured as Heavenly Venus and the new Eve-figure, or the manner in which he is lured to God. In this capacity, like Socrates who acts as a midwife as well as a *daimon* (*Symposium* 202d10, 202e1-203a8), Beatrice mediates between the human and divine acting as a channel of God's grace⁶ in order to beget not only virtue and understanding but a new creation, a new Dante. Beatrice mediates between God and man in a manner which extends beyond the myth of *eros*, resolving its *aporia*, exemplified by Beatrice in Paradise in which she simultaneously desires and is fully satisfied and fulfilled by God.⁷

² Cambon, pp. 64 and 66.

³ Chiampi, p. 62

⁴ Brandeis, pp. 107-8

⁵ Augustine, *de Trinitate*, Book IX, sec. 12.

⁶ Smith, *The Greatness of Dante Alighieri*, p. 27; Brandeis, p. 104; Mazzeo, *Medieval Cultural Tradition*, pp. 129-130.

⁷ "Francesca and Beatrice are related to each other like the two faces of the moon, and the antithesis is so subtle that a glimpsed ray of lost Paradise illumines Francesca's visage, while a deadly power inheres, before Dante is ready for it, in Beatrice's radiance. Francesca is a victim, self-defeated despite all the extenuating circumstances Dante knows, and Beatrice a victor; the former shows him love as despair, the latter introduces him to heavenly joy." (Cambon, p. 55)

This dichotomy created by the opposing forms of love, Beatrice redeemed and fulfilled as opposed to the condemned and unfulfilled Francesca, results from a choice of the object of love, the beloved. As in Plato's *Symposium*, love is the same, a mixture of *poros* and *penia*, yet, from the human point of view, is determined by its object. Augustine points to this when he writes that both *concupiditas* and *caritas* have a single source in *amor* (*de Trinitate*, IX, 12). The choice of loved object determines the outcome whether good or bad. However in the *Symposium*, given that *Eros* is the child of *Poros* as well as *Penia*, providing that it possesses a strand of *poros*, "intelligent reflection" on carnal love has the capacity in principle for transforming or transcending it.⁸ In contrast for Dante given that *lussuria*, uncontrolled earthly *eros* exemplified by Francesca as sin, results in death and damnation, Romans 3: 23, 6: 23, it seems to contain no seeds within itself to a higher more transcendent form of love, though as is evident in the *Vita Nuova* *amor* has this potential. Given that the sinner is dead in his or her transgressions, it is only through a full repentance made possible by God's love and grace that the sinner can be forgiven of this sinful love and thereby transcend this condition. In the *Commedia* the subjugation of reason by desire represents a choice by which *amor*, which can possess virtue, degrades to uncontrolled carnal desire, lust, while the choice of virtue which is inspired by *caritas* results in spiritual desire, *caritas*. Given the element of free choice and that God's love and grace are constantly offered to us if only we reach out and accept them, the situation could have always been otherwise.⁹ Francesca could have been Beatrice had she not abandoned reason for desire and focused upon physical satisfaction of her desires.¹⁰ Likewise Dante could have been Paolo trapped in Hell, though he chose not to be.¹¹ The *Commedia* could have been a tragedy, but it is not. Thus as Platonic *eros* is determined by its object so, due to God's love and grace which opened the way of

⁸ "Intelligent reflection on the 'lower' (Francesca-type) object of love will itself give the lover good reasons for transcending it and moving 'upwards'; and there are analogous ideas in the *Phaedrus*...In the *Symposium* the fact that someone's love is focused on a quasi-Francesca figure (or is the sort that Francesca herself experiences) does not necessarily condemn it as a dead end, or identify it with unsurmountable *penia*. It already contains within itself the seeds of progress to a higher state, no matter how carnal it may, at present, be" given that it likewise possesses a strand of *poros* "which provides a route towards a real fulfilment in which love itself is (perhaps) transcended" (Barker, 2002).

⁹ "The very fact that it is an infernal scene, whose character bears some proportion with the nature of both the sin and the punishment of the two lovers, calls into being its opposite, a paradisaical scene, or its equivalent." (Masciandaro, p. 78)

¹⁰ Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 106.

¹¹ Cambon, p. 55

salvation by “[setting] eternity in his heart” (Ecclesiast 3: 11), Dante’s potentiality is determined by the destination of his desire, whether or not he chooses to respond.

Thus we see that Dante like Plato presupposes a fullness, but Dante understands this fullness to be the ultimate object of fulfilment, God. In contrast to Plato who tentatively presents fulfilment only as a distant possibility, Dante believes that for us in this life it is constantly available, or capable of being reached, achieved and possessed, though by fulfilment he means an eternal personal relationship of fulfilling love with God. Quite different from Diotima’s hungry lover/philosopher who lacks and knows that he lacks, for Dante union with God is a state simultaneously of desire and complete fulfilment (Pertile, p.155). In *Paradiso* all desire for knowledge and affection is constantly and eternally fully satisfied. Thus Dante does not emphasize lack but stresses fullness. However unlike Plato who only considers this fullness a distant possibility, Dante believes complete fulfilment with God to be constantly offered to us¹²; this through repentance and continued righteousness due to and in response to God’s gift of grace, which allows Dante to return to God thus forming a cycle of love. For Plato fullness is only a possibility in that as it is achieved through a “gradual self-enlightenment with strongly intellectual as well as emotional and ethical components” (Barker, 2002). In this sense man’s capacity for fullness is dependent upon himself, his will and capability on many levels. In contrast fullness for Dante, though involving a long journey demanding much struggle and effort, nonetheless is ultimately dependent upon revelation and grace which allow for repentance. In this case, it is God’s fullness expressed in his abundant love and forgiveness of Dante which allows Dante to perceive God, to be given the grace to repent and be forgiven by God, whereby he accepts and receives God’s fullness (1 John 4: 19, 1 John 4: 8-10). This is the distinction between *eros* and *agape*. *Eros* involving the pursuit of ethical self-perfection is a self-willed ascent while *agape* is a downpouring of God’s selfless love and forgiveness on the individual which in

¹² Barker (2002) points out that this contrast needs sensitive handling “since Dante’s setting is (in Platonic terms) ‘mythological’, it is hard to be sure exactly how it relates to the ordinary human lives it allegorizes. In another rather obvious sense, too, what Dante attains is ‘distant’ from most people [in]...that he only achieves this fullness after much struggle and pain (and in the poem’s terms, long journeying).” As we have seen, though, in Plato fullness becomes possible through the bootstrapping operations of intelligent reflection, of which not all may be capable, while in Dante it is the gift of grace, universally and always available.

Augustinian thought is fused in his notion of *caritas* causing man's return to God. Nonetheless, in similar fashion to Plato's philosophical deflation of others through *aporia*, only through acknowledging his poverty, sin, *penia*, can Dante advance towards fulfilment and reconciliation with God.

This leaves open the question of irony which, as previously noted, though crucial and interwoven with *eros* and *aporia* in Plato, is little mentioned with regard to Dante, thus indicating an aspect of the Platonic tradition to which Dante had not been exposed. Dante was enabled under the influence of Platonism to present *eros* as having the form of a dynamic which leads to a positive transformation of love in part through the dialectic of love involving a form of recantation. We have noted certain analogues of Socratic and Platonic irony in Dante's treatment, but beyond these there may be a further, strategic, irony. For it is at least worth asking whether Dante does not structurally capture the ironic dimension in that any dialectic of love inevitably remains open-ended whereas the *Commedia*, through the vision of God as the ultimate object of desire, presents a formal closure. It is a question strongly analogous to that which Plato surely invites us to press with respect to Aristophanes' lovers in the *Symposium*.

2. DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF LOVE

We have explored a Platonic influence on Dante's conception of *eros*. First we traced Dante's philosophical Neo-Platonist heritage, then examined it through the influence of courtly love and the Troubadours upon him. This was followed by an analysis of Francesca and Beatrice, seen as echoing the opposition of *penia* and *poros*. Through this Dante shows Christianity to extend beyond Platonism, positing the actuality of the fullness of the Christian God while the fullness in Platonism remains only a possibility. In order to understand this extension, the point at which Dante goes beyond Plato, we must examine precisely how they differ.

When we ask what change has occurred in the notion of love between Plato and Dante, we find that the key areas are the relation of the lover and beloved, the love of the individual, and redemption through grace.

That Beatrice the beloved acts as *poros* (pathway) leading Dante to God (*Poros* as

Resource) indicates a reversal of roles in the relationship of *erastes* (lover) and *eromenos* (beloved). In terms of the relation of lover and beloved¹³ in ancient Greece, the *erastes* loves though gradually intellectualizing his desire in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, while the *eromenos* traditionally remains indifferent. Likewise,

Dante's emphasis in his early work began to fall almost exclusively on the part of the lover; more specifically, on the moral progress resulting from his sublimation of erotic feeling. The lover overcome by desire begins in a state of passion and wrath; the beloved is in a state of meekness desiring nothing. The *Vita Nuova* is the story of the gradual development of love from this bewildering tension of inner emotions to the achievement of inner peace by sublimating intellectualization. (Shapero, *Woman, Earthly and Divine*, p. 85)

Despite being the expression of God's grace, and Charles Williams' reading of Beatrice as being truly in love with Dante, she as an individual seems less in love with him than he with her as an individual despite her descent into Hell for him, her efforts in bringing him to God, and her backward/downward gaze in *Paradiso XXXIII*.¹⁴ However in this process, for Plato the elder and more knowledgeable person is lover while for Dante his beloved younger Beatrice has the wisdom of God. While continuing to follow perfectionist ends, Dante and Beatrice, as with the love of Alcibiades for Socrates, twist the conventional/traditional roles of *erastes* and *eromenos* as she who is wise is the beloved as *penia* loves *poros*. Dante inverts the relation of *erastes* and *eromenos* not only in that Dante defines his view as pertaining to heterosexual relations but also in that he with less knowledge loves, humanly speaking, more. However this view exists within the greater dialectic that God loved us first and is therefore the true lover and Dante the beloved, while Beatrice acts as the expression of God's love, a point to which we shall

¹³ The most apparent difference is that Plato discusses relations between men. *Phaedrus* 252D5-4 and 253B7-8 indicate the relation is between a man and a youth. Dante discusses heterosexual relations, particularly as homosexuality is classified as sin in the Bible (see Romans 1: 26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10). Therefore, "the antique Platonist, as appears from numerous passages in the Platonic writings, would have despised the Petrarchist as a vulgar woman-lover. The Petrarchist would have loathed the Platonist as a moral pariah" (Symonds "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love", p. 82).

¹⁴ Chiampì's (pp. 51-53) and Williams' (*Descent of the Dove*, p. 135) opposing arguments as to Beatrice's personal feelings towards Dante are equally extreme. In contrast Dante always loves her deeply and passionately as an individual, while she consistently loves him in Dante's understanding of a God-inspired maternal way seeking his spiritual good. Though a higher form of love, Beatrice's love remains less personal and is non-acquisitive as it is an expression of God's love.

soon return.

Given that Beatrice acts as the *poros* or pathway to God, Dante in his understanding of God's love for man attributes a higher value to the role of the individual and to love of the individual than Vlastos acknowledges in the *Symposium's scala d'amor*. Mazzeo as we have previously seen takes an extreme and perhaps misguided view of this issue. He writes,

In spite of all the similarities, there is one crucial difference between platonic *Eros* and Dante's "amore." The soul of the lover of beauty in both Dante and Plato ascends to immaterial beauty, but in Dante the beloved is not left behind on the bottom rung of the ladder, or at the first stage of the process. The beloved is transformed and elevated in her death—she achieves a greater, immaterial beauty. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 132)

However, as we have discussed, in the *Symposium* since the individual in seeking immortality strives to beget *arête* in the other, Plato does not leave the beloved on the first rung of his ascent. More explicitly in the Palinode of the *Phaedrus*, the lovers are engaged in a dialectical ascent involving *eros* and understanding, imaged as love passing through eyes which is echoed in the ascent of Beatrice and Dante in *Paradiso*. Whether Dante's attribution of value to the love of the individual indirectly finds its origins in the *Phaedrus* is highly debatable, whether through Ovid or through Neo-Platonism, however one thing is certain: this value of the love of the individual is the immediate contribution not only of Christianity but also of courtly love and the Troubadours, showing the integration of courtly love into the Christian framework,¹⁵ hence the reconciliation of courtly love and Christianity.¹⁶

Within the *Commedia*, in contrast to some extent with the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, Dante fully develops the personality and history of the individual (a reading Nussbaum might object to given her over-emphasis on the individualization of the lovers in her reading of the *Phaedrus* in *The Fragility of Goodness*). Mazzeo rightly says this shows

¹⁵ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 132.

¹⁶ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 137.

the importance Christianity gave to personality in its scheme of values and its plan of salvation. Its God is personal, and the death of one of the elect involves survival of personality as well as increase in value, in goodness and beauty. Dante turned to Beatrice after a period of error, doubt, and confusion because through her supernatural aid, her personal interest in him which survived death, he came to realize that he should have loved her more, not less, after she died. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 132)

This emphasis on the individual, though not entirely new (as we saw in Part One of this thesis), is accentuated in Dante. Furthermore, given that the beloved is a woman, this increase of emphasis shows the influence of the most positive of the contributions of courtly love, an increase in man's valuation of and respect for women, though at times both in courtly love and in the *Commedia* this is exaggerated. Dante marks an increase in value of the individual as an object of love and lover mainly due to God's love for man as an individual soul, and Dante's belief in God's desire for a personal relationship with man and for man's individual salvation which involves the confrontation with and repentance of his personal sins. In this way the new emphasis on the importance of the individual, the actual person, as a continued active element in the ascent to truth¹⁷ seems to open the way to the love of the individual like, but in a more fully articulated form than, that expressed in the *Phaedrus*.

Given that for Dante God, who is perfect, selflessly loves and desires to redeem man who is imperfect, Dante believes in the necessity of grace, a concept not available to Plato. For Plato, desire (coupled with intelligence) is enough to ascend to the form of the beautiful. Though Socrates says "he must approach or be led", giving the impression that the journey is part personal desire and part instruction (*Symp.* 211C1), it is the effort and power/desire of the individual which determines whether or not he sees the forms (*Symp.* 211C1-8). (In this vision men are seen as powerful and self-determined; *Republic* 617E.) In contrast for Dante, holding to a Christian position, desire is not enough. In Christianity "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), so every man deserves to die. Given man's fallen nature/propensity to sin and thus inevitable condemnation, man must be forgiven of his sins in order to have a relationship with God, (because "[his] sins have hidden [God's]

¹⁷ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 132.

face from [him]"; Isaiah 59:2) and be with God for eternity. "Because God so loved the world he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16) as a perfect sinless sacrifice in order to redeem man from his sins. Through being crucified and raised to life again/resurrected, Jesus enabled those who believe in him and follow him and his teachings wholeheartedly to be saved and reconciled to God. This forgiveness of sins received at baptism (subsequently through the confession of sins and repentance) is a gift which because of man's sins he did not deserve, "the gift of God [being] eternal life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:23). Adhering to this Christian position Dante, the pilgrim, in *Inferno* I desired to climb the mount of Purgatory directly; however he was prevented by his sins, taking the form of the three beasts. (Also see Virgil in *Purgatorio* XXX who cannot ascend to God regardless of his desire.) Therefore for Dante desire is insufficient for salvation.

Though man comes from God and remembers God, partially resembling on some level *anamnesis*,¹⁸ it is only through God's intervention, his grace, that man can be saved (a position we mentioned with regard to Augustine). "Desire for the final vision is not enough [though]....with Beatrice's help he finally achieved his aim." (Mazzeo, *Medieval Culture*, p. 126-7) Following his descent into Hell and his climbing of Mount Purgatory, and after being rebuked by Beatrice confessing, repenting and being baptized, his sins are forgiven and he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, an expression of God's grace, a gift undeserved, and is therefore redeemed. He is then led by Beatrice, representing God's grace, up through the Heavens of the *Paradiso* to the vision of God in the highest point and centre of Paradise.¹⁹ Therefore, for Dante, this gift of grace comes through Beatrice, exemplifying the wisdom of God though not as unconverted reason might understand

¹⁸ This is demonstrated in that the memory of God is substituted for *anamnesis*. Associated with the notion of reincarnation and transmigration of soul, Plato believed in *anamnesis*, the remembering of the forms from a prenatal existence (248A1-3) as shown in the *Phaedrus* 254B6 "the driver's memory goes back to that form of beauty". Likewise in the *Commedia* Dante expresses nostalgia "for a beauty once seen and then in part forgotten". "The sight of Plato's plain of truth which each man saw in a disembodied pre-existent state is replaced by that instantaneous contact of the soul with God at the moment of its creation" (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 22; also pp. 59-60), which "[implants] love for the Creator 'your life the Supreme Beneficence breathes forth immediately, and He so enamours it of Himself that it desires Him ever after'" (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, pp. 59-60). This causes it unfathomable joy which through the body is dulled causing nostalgia (see *Paradiso* XXXIII, 57), an "imprinted passion" like a good though forgotten dream motivating a continued search through inappropriate objects until it finds God. (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 24)

¹⁹ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 133.

wisdom; Beatrice's presence in his life is an expression and proof of God's love and grace upon him. "The beloved girl is a miracle, a beatrice (or blessing-bearer)" (Brandeis, p. 107) as she is "a channel of grace. Dante's cosmology of love and light as beauty would have remained merely the framework of a possible salvation²⁰ had there not been grace, and, in its ultimately incomprehensible way, it was bestowed through the instrumentality of the beauty of a person" (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 133).²¹ Grace is this "additional aspect, the love of God for man which makes his salvation possible and which makes the flight to God possible" (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 133-4).²² Salvation is ultimately determined, as we saw in the case of Virgil and in the exclusion of Plato and Aristotle from Purgatory and Paradise, by a Christian faith in God and forgiveness of sins, grace which allows a proper reconciliation through Jesus Christ, a point which distinguishes Dante from Platonism.

In this way Christianity and Dante judge and condemn Platonism as an *aporia* (lack of way), a belief system directed towards and founded upon the pursuit of self-perfection, hence the self, and therefore, as we saw with Francesca on *penia*, not founded on God. Platonism did not recognize God to be the source of all resource and complete fullness, the ultimate and true *Poros*. Admittedly Plato does posit an initial fullness through *anamnesis* of the forms. However though Dante and Plato both posit a fullness or truth, Dante and Christianity would consider the Platonist to be worshipping "an unknown god" (Act 17: 23). Dante following Christianity is opening himself beyond his personal determinations, through recognizing his personal weakness and sin and

²⁰ Plato expresses only the possibility of salvation. In *Symposium* 212A6, he writes "if ever it is given to a man to put on immortality". "Virgil as well as Beatrice is a 'natural' instrument of salvation, but they only remain possibilities unless they are actualized as instruments by God, and this actualization is charismatic. The ladder of love and beauty remains only a possibility unless we climb it. That it exists is a natural fact. That certain particular individuals climb it and others do not is a function of both grace and free will." (Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 134)

²¹ Foster seems inaccurate in his criticism of Dante's use of grace. He writes, "The theory of grace, if theory it can be called, is the weak point in Dantean theology." And in note 13, "Here it may suffice to say that I have in mind: (a) the Good Pagans in Dante's Limbo, (b) the rarity of his allusions to the Sacraments. True, there is the impressive allegory of *Purgatorio* IX: but taking the Comedy as a whole, there is a lack of emphasis on life in the Body of Christ on earth, I think." (Foster, "The Mind in Love", p. 48) Foster has not recognized that Beatrice symbolically represents the Host, and therefore has not understood her to represent the presence and articulation of God's grace in Dante's life.

²² In his whole discussion Mazzeo is conflating Platonic and Plotinian/Neo-Platonist thought as would have been received through Augustine; this also is how, in part, Dante would have received the Platonic influence as we have seen.

acknowledging the existence, influence and desire of God. Thus in recognizing God as the ultimate *Poros* of mankind whether he chooses to follow it or not, Dante progresses far beyond Platonic desire. Rather than focusing upon his own desire, strength, knowledge and *poros*, he realizes his own human fragility, ignorance, sin and therefore *penia*. He recognizes his inability to achieve fullness by himself. However by humbling himself before the omnipotent and omniscient God who is knowable through his Son, but simultaneously recognizing God's desire for a relation of mutual love with him as an individual,²³ demonstrated through the crucifixion, he can through God reach fullness, salvation, and Heaven, unlike Platonism in which salvation is only envisaged as a remote possibility. For this reason it seems that Christianity is the way (*poros*) out of the *aporia* of the world as well as out of the recurring *aporia* of knowledge, and hence philosophy.²⁴ Through Grace, the expression of God's *agape*, Dante expresses the raising of Platonic *eros* to a new level, extending it beyond itself, so that Christianity responds to the questions posed by Platonism. Dante converts the *aporia* in Platonic *eros*, integrating it into and causing it to contribute to the *poros* of Christianity. Christianity can thus be read as the *poros* out of the *aporia* of Platonism, and similarly *caritas/agape* as the *poros* out of the *aporia* of *eros*.

²³ Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought*, p. 134.

²⁴ "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1: 22-24)

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