

Love and Persuasion: Strategies Essential to Philosophy as a Way of Life

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In this paper, I intend to argue that a conception of philosophy as a way of life needs two elements: persuasion and love. Faced a false conception of philosophy very specialized, professional, and modern that has condemned to oblivion philosophy itself, we propose a therapeutic conception (of philosophy) as a way of life, a philosophy that is not reduced to a conceptual content, but that is related to the way of life of the philosopher.

Keywords: philosophy, love, persuasion, Gorgias, Plato, Mozart, Molière, Kierkegaard

“To be loved, there is no need of the smiles of the gods or the darts of Venus.”
(Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, IV, 1279-80)

The pairing of the word “persuasion” with the concept “love” may at first appear arbitrary or, worse still, wholly inept. Persuasion or seduction through words is associated with an infinite range of wiles and stratagems of a highly practical nature; to be valid, it must be directed at the other. Love, by contrast, betokens boundless purity, for its ideation requires a single individual; its theoretical task accomplished, its practical application has to be constructed. This paper argues that the concept of philosophy as a way of life requires both elements: persuasion and love. Eschewing the nakedly parasitic seduction of a specialised or modern view of philosophy which has consigned the discipline to oblivion, it sets out a therapeutic view of philosophy as a model for living, a philosophy not reduced to conceptual content, but bearing inextricably on the philosopher’s way of life.

1. Love and its Moral Responsibility in Gorgias

Philosophy is not some leisurely discussion of language of being or not being; rather, it is a way of learning to live in a more humane, more hopeful, happier way. Philosophical discourse has meaning only if it reflects a philosophical life; then, “it becomes wholly legitimate and even indispensable” (Arnold I. Davidson 2003).¹ At first sight, persuasion and love appear to be different situations: one viewed as wicked when linked to lies and the other eternally celebrated as pure and forthright. Yet this distinction may prove too coarse, too imprecise when applied to philosophy as a way of life. Persuasion and love should be bound to each other, like each object to its shadow. Gorgias, a Sophist of the 5th century BC, in his “Encomium of Helen”—a work not about love but about moral responsibility (that of the one who falls in love)—offers two possible definitions of love:

a/ It is the “physiological” result of sensory knowledge of the object loved;²

b/ It is the consequence of seduction through speech. Speech, here, has such persuasive force that it can

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engender love in the beautiful Helen.³ Seduction and love have their own momentum, independent of their creators. Helen's fate is inevitable: *factum infectum fieri non potest* (Done is done, it cannot be made undone). Thus Helen, guilty only of misfortune, will be forgiven, being cast as a defenceless victim deserving more of pity than of hatred or reproof. Helen's love, then, is not to blame for the consequences deriving from the unbridled ambition of men/warriors.

So persuasion goes hand in hand with love⁴ and not just in Helen's case. For the Greeks, interestingly enough, "Persuasion" is a goddess, often featured in the retinue attending Aphrodite. "Πειθῶ" clearly refers to the power of the word as exerted on the other to its magic and seduction as experienced by the other, analogous—as the myth notes—to the seduction of a woman with the "charm of one's gaze," the "persuasive sweetness of one's voice," and the "appeal of one's physical beauty." Aeschylus defines "Persuasion" as "She to whom nothing was ever denied" (1040-1).⁵

Now in all these mythical elements, there is a certain ambiguity of terms. The goddess "Πειθῶ" is all-powerful, among both gods and men; she casts "spells of honeyed words" endowed with the power to bewitch. The strategy of love requires the all-powerful enchantment of seduction. But seduction can also mask the real goal; through sly blandishments the unprincipled lover can gain his object. It is hardly surprising that, in mythical thought, no distinction is drawn between rhetoric and seduction and that "Πειθῶ" herself glides seamlessly between the two.⁶ The "good Πειθῶ" of Aphrodite (love and persuasion forming a single whole) with all its tenderness and desire, its words of love with seductive purpose, all of which contribute to a positive plot, is inextricably bound to the "bad Πειθῶ," where "lies" and "deceitful words" replace "loving talk." Hence, the myth of the wicked, unscrupulous woman is embodied in Pandora: Zeus, to punish man for stealing fire, creates Pandora (all gifts) and instructs her in the art of lying, endowing her with beguiling words, whose sole function will be to drive men to their own destruction. The words of Zeus strike fear: "Son of Iapetus, surpassing all in cunning, you are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire; a great plague to you yourself and to men that shall be. But I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction" (Hesiod, 54-59).⁷

Much later, the idea that speech persuades men, moulding their minds to its purpose, is propounded in radical form by Protagoras, who—by reducing the problem of truth to a problem of directing belief and the will—highlights the importance of suggestion through words as a way of transforming and stimulating the affective outlook of the individual. Even more forceful, if possible, is Gorgias' exaltation of the fascinating magic power of the word. For in the picture he paints, just as the doctor heals our body, the seducer works a transformation of our faith in any given belief. All these prompt a wholesale dissolving of the concepts of truth and opinion (illusion) of reality and appearance that distinction belongs to the metaphysics started by the Eleatics; it has no meaning in the approach adopted by the Sophists.

Love is revealed, then, in a setting of (carnal) intercourse and dialogue, a setting at once erotic and loving, where Eros appears in the guise of speech.⁸ The body speaks in many ways, but of all its organs, the tongue is the subtlest, the most sensual and exciting. Plato was fully aware of the "scheming" nature of love, observing in his *Symposium*: "Like his father (Eros), whom he resembles, love is always plotting against the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other; he is keen in the pursuit of wisdom, fertile in resources; a philosopher throughout his life, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist" (Plato, 203d).⁹

But in philosophy we can neither lie nor deceive; we may be wrong, but we always take for granted that

the love of knowledge is a good thing, the *φιλία* that accompanies wisdom. And that is where persuasion comes into play. “Good seduction” accompanies love; it is love’s most clearly-defined and “excellent” strategy: love and persuasion overlap, merging in a single purpose. As a result, the idea of the seducer of what is viewed today as the deceiver, gradually disappears from Greek philosophy: lying, deceit through the word, the wicked Πειθῶ, expands as we approach the Greek myths, but fades away to nothing in the development of philosophy. In a world recognised as changing, impermanent, from which the gods tend to vanish as the personification of natural phenomena or as moral exemplars, man and woman increasingly become what Protagoras called “the measure of all things.” It is they, therefore, rather than the gods or their spokesmen the prophets that who must be questioned regarding the value and the truth of things. And man’s answers are just opinions; opinions that may be wrong, but never false.

Philosophers during the Hellenistic period—Epicureans, Sceptics and Stoics—fashioned three dreams aimed at defeating unhappiness and disquiet through philosophy, seeing philosophy as a way of coping with the sorest trials of human existence. They viewed the philosopher as a caring physician whose arts could heal countless forms of human suffering. They set themselves to find a way of life, a way of being, that was not reduced to a philosophical discourse wholly detached from the fact of living; for them, the philosopher was not an “artist of reason” concerned only with speculation to use Kant’s term, but rather a man who practised what he preached.¹⁰ “The philosopher’s school is a clinic” warned Epictetus. A clinic completes with medical protocols, whose therapeutic nature is evident first and foremost in the discourse of the master, a discourse which works like a spell, a bite, a violent shock, a drug that cures. But in order to be cured, it is not enough simply to be moved (the persuasive moment); one has to really want to change one’s life (the moment of love). And this is where emotions and lifestyle come into play. Philosophy is an exercise in the Stoic sense and a technique for living, in the Epicurean sense; for the Sceptics, it is the art of leading an untroubled life. These different views share a common feature: an insistence on philosophy not merely as the teaching of abstract theories, but as a true love of life.¹¹

Yet this appealing view failed to win out in the History of Philosophy; it was roundly defeated and supplanted by its greatest enemy. This embracing of love and persuasion as effective complements to any philosophical undertaking was replaced by the Western metaphysical view which arose—according to Perniola—from Socrates-Plato’s dismissal of sophistry and the Judaic detestation of the blandishments of idolatry.¹² Thenceforth, “persuasion through the word” began to take on a twofold negative connotation associated with theology and with licentiousness. Theologians blamed persuasion for the fall of man, branding it an evil that corrupted mankind (the seduction of Eve by the serpent).¹³ For the libertine, persuasion was the assertion of one person’s will over that of another. The theological view, in other words, condemned precisely what the rake exalted; the former abhorring as “Devilish Pride” what the latter hailed as the “Promethean triumph of human resourcefulness.”¹⁴

2. The Erotic-Ironic Myth of Don Juan

The triumph of this twofold theological-licentious view of persuasion has done much to weaken philosophy as a way of life. A hint of suspicion pervades the auditorium; we all believe we may be deceived (leading us, teleologically, to cling firmly to our views, for our own protection) or seduced (driven into Hedonism as an outlook). The Don Juan myth (the most widely-reviewed myth of modern culture) is the embodiment of all these assumptions. The figure of Don Juan was originally created for the theatre, later

passing into music and afterwards featuring in a range of literary genres. Obviously, there is not just one Don Juan; the myth proliferated and was transformed, at times into something wholly unrecognisable. The theme of the traveller who invites a stranger to dine, thinking him alive, only to discover that in fact he is dining with a simulacrum, for his guest is dead, is a medieval commonplace first adapted (1630) by Gabriel Téllez, writing under the pseudonym Tirso de Molina (1579-1648). His play gave the eponymous Sevillian rake something of a reputation in Europe. Molière in France (1665), Shadwell in England (1676), and later Byron, Tolstoy, Dumas, and Zorrilla back in Spain (1844); all addressed this transcendental myth from a variety of perspectives. Suffice it to note that in 1787 no fewer than nine operas with “Donjuanesco” titles were composed. The themes also varied: Byron’s *Don Juan* is a satirical poem in XXI cantos, part cynical, part tender, where there is no sign of the great seducer, and the hero is just an ordinary man seduced by women; Bernard Shaw’s *Don Juan (Man and Superman)*, 1903, for his part, is an old man unable to seduce women but used by them as an instrument for reproduction. In *Don Juan or the Love of Geometry*, by the Swiss playwright Max Frisch, the protagonist—the coldest Don Juan of all—forsakes women for geometry and chess, while J. Anouilh (1955) presents us with the most pathetic Don Juan, who dies of a heart attack like a vulgar bourgeois.

Interestingly, the classical figure of Don Juan, as briefly sketched above, has gradually lost his “heroic” nature; there has been increasingly less emphasis on the themes of seduction, love, and repentance which originally shaped the myth. Here, by contrast, I intend to focus on the consistent figure whose uniform characteristics are to be found in the three major treatments of the myth: the play by Tirso de Molina (1630), Molière’s drama (1665), and Mozart’s opera “Don Giovanni” (1787). In all three works, Don Juan historically embodies the figure of the seducer, the con-man, the unavoidable lover; a personification of the pejorative connotations of seduction, stripped of its once-inseparable partner: love. The force of this myth has prompted the dissociation of two aspects necessary to philosophy and indeed to any human communication. Persuasion and love walk hand in hand where there is no deceit, complementing each other in a subtle, sincere quest for truth. It is their separation that leads to deceit, amorality, indifference, and hopelessness.

Yet this paradigm defining the seducer is erroneous. The classical figure of Don Juan has little to do with the seducer; love is not the fundamental theme of this myth. In Tirso de Molina, for example, other themes—death, time, blame, eternity—are more important than love or seduction (it is not by chance that the play is traditionally performed in Spain on All Soul’s Day). Don Juan’s real crime is not his deceit in matters of love, but rather his failure to believe in repentance. Tirso offers us a religious model. The key question in the play is: What is the right moment for the soul to be saved? At what point in life is salvation still to be gained? It is this theological theme that the work addresses. Doña Ines saves him, from time-eternity; he is not redeemed by love.

Molière’s Don Juan offers a more subtle example. He is censured, after all, apparently for the scandalous nature of his amorous exploits. Yet this masks another underlying issue: a freedom of thought that gives rise to freedom of behaviour, whose provocative disposition (attitude) conceals one of Don Juan’s most outstanding features—his atheism. One might therefore say that his scandalous philandering, which he makes no attempt to hide but rather flaunts in order to shock and bewilder, in fact turns a more philosophical outlook into an erotic attitude. A distinction is thus to be drawn between the (dangerous) philosophical elements concealed in the play and the overtly scandalous elements that are publicly responsible for the prohibition and condemnation of the myth. Incredibly, this nuance has sometimes passed unnoticed, leading to some blurring of the real meaning of Don Juan. I should like to provide an example which usually goes unremarked, which confirms that the real

danger of his free-thinking lay not in any relaxation of moral customs, or in his erotic-seductive exploits, but in his philosophical ideas.

At its first performance in 1662, Molière's "School for Wives" caused a huge scandal, prompting the playwright's religious enemies to accuse him of impiety and incest. In 1664, those same enemies managed to get a ban imposed on the première of his *Tartuffe*. Molière retaliated by boldly addressing a Spanish theme: the myth of Don Juan. In 1665, he published *Dom Juan or the Feast of Stone*. The play was immediately censored and remained abridged for over a century. The pretext for the ban was that the play was deemed scandalous because of its erotic episodes. However, that was not the real reason for the censorship. Moreover, the censored part of the play had no bearing on any of Don Juan's amorous or licentious activities.

Why, then, was it censored? The offending lines are to be found in the middle of Act III, scene ii, a curious episode which contains no licentious exploit, nor any amorous dallying. What does it contain? Don Juan, lost in a wood, comes upon a vagrant, who begs alms for the love of God. Don Juan agrees to give him alms, not for the love of God, but for the love of mankind; but he will do so only on condition that the beggar first blasphemes against God. This is the scene in question:

Don Juan: ... I will give you a golden Louis in just a moment, provided that you swear (*pourvu que tu veuilles jurer*).

Beggar: Sir, would you have me commit such a sin?

Don Juan: You have only to decide if you want a gold Louis or not. Here's the one I will give you, if you swear; take it, you only have to swear.

Beggar: Sir!

Don Juan: For less than this, you shall not have it.

Sganarelle: Go ahead, swear a little. There's no harm (*Va, va, jure un peu, il n'y a pas de mal*).

Beggar: No, Sir. I would rather die of hunger.

Don Juan: Take it anyway, then. I give it to you out of love for humanity (*pour l'amour de l'humanité*).¹⁵ (Molière 1971, 59-60)

This scene, which testifies to Don Juan's irreligious nature and is so dangerous because the weak-minded might make bad use of it, is promptly removed for the second performance.¹⁶ The censoring of this dialogue makes clear that the banning of *Don Juan* is not attributable to its erotic content, nor to the licentious attitudes it portrayed, but rather to Don Juan's atheism. The danger lies, then, in his challenge to God. Don Juan, clearly, is a rake; but more importantly he does not believe in God, or in death, or in anything but the truth of mathematics, and this is his besetting sin, not his frantic seductions but his impious ideas about God and religion.

Mozart's *Don Giovanni* tells us something else that casts doubt on the constant, ongoing reduction of Don Juan to a mere seducer of women. In the opera, the briskness of Don Giovanni's conquests moves the audience to laughter, or to a benevolent, ironic scepticism. He completely seduces and abandons Elvira with unusual speed, the reason for which is explained in the opera: Don Giovanni has already seduced 1003 women in Spain alone. Being so, we can readily understand that these exploits require considerable, carefully-calculated haste. He has barely time left to enjoy the love he has allegedly won through deceit. This recalls the bragging of the *Miles Gloriosus*, which arouses more scepticism than acceptance. Don Giovanni deceives and deludes (bad *peitho*) rather than persuading; it is in the guise of a trickster that he appears on stage.

The two-act opera *Don Giovanni*, written by Mozart when he was 31, is widely considered his best opera, and is undoubtedly the best of the musical compositions based on the legend of Don Juan. Indeed, in his 1843 book *Enter-Eller* (Either/Or), the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard included a long essay passionately

hailing Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as the greatest work of art ever created. The libretto appears to have drawn on Giovanni Bertati's *Don Juan Tenorio or the Stone Guest*, the first adaption of Tirso de Molina's play *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*, with music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga. Don Juan is a blasphemous philanderer who seeks in every woman the feminine ideal; the whole story depends on this sensual idealisation that he projects onto his victims. So the idea of Don Juan belongs to Christianity; it is the total embodiment of the flesh. Don Juan constantly wavers between being an idea and being a person. Henceforth, sensuality will be viewed as a principle and as a result, eroticism will be defined as a mere attribute of seduction. Don Juan is an out-and-out seducer, for even as he makes love to one woman, he is already thinking about another. His love is perfidious; he is sensual and, by definition, unfaithful.

Mozart's music succeeds in creating the authentic rake, a figure of overwhelming thoughtlessness, desire, and deceit, who outshines all the other characters. The boundless humanity of the valet Leporello, Don Ottavio's placidity, Donna Anna's desire for revenge, Donna Elvira's love-hate attitude to Don Giovanni, Zerlina's seductive wantonness, the naïveté of the coarse Masetto, and even the terrifying appearance of the Commendatore in the last act, none of this can overshadow the character of Don Giovanni. Not even his descent into Hell, as the earth opens up, can dilute his protagonism. This is a brilliant idea: Countering the Christian tradition that held sway at the time, the trickster refuses to repent, and for that he is condemned. It is therefore curious that, at its première in Prague, the opera concluded with a light, relaxed ensemble involving all the characters; this ending was banned in Vienna, where it was held to be in doubtful moral taste and subversive in that it applauded death as a means of vengeance.

3. Seduction as a Harmless Aesthetic State

Soren Kierkegaard focuses on the amorous ambivalence of the seducer, taking this myth as his model. Kierkegaard's programme can briefly be set out as follows. There are three spheres of existence (Existents—Sphæres): aesthetic, ethical, and religious. Seduction is to be included in the aesthetic sphere or stage, which for Kierkegaard includes everything that betokens spontaneity in man, i.e., the life of sensations, particularly in the area of sensual pleasure and eroticism. This stage stands in opposition—let it be said—to the two truly existential stages, ethical, and religious. Even so, it is the first human reality and, arguably, the only reality readily accessible to us. To write about seduction is, to some extent, a way of rendering it harmless, for it is action, more than anything else that characterises the aesthetic stage: To our regret, perhaps also to Kierkegaard's regret, to write about seduction is not exactly to seduce.

We cannot know whether Kierkegaard's aesthetic enquiries into these issues have an autobiographical background. Nor does it matter: The man does not have to wholly justify his writings with his life.¹⁷ For Kierkegaard, the principle of seduction lies in the force of passion, in the energy of sensual desire. This force or energy is displayed in two opposing forms, represented by two kinds of seducer. One is embodied by the figure of Don Juan and the other by a character he calls "Johannes," given more to reflection than to passion. This response to the traditional Don Juan appears in Kierkegaard's "Diary of a Seducer," in which he argues that Don Juan is not a true seducer, but rather "an impostor," who makes use of "evil persuasion." To be a seducer requires a certain degree of reflection and awareness of love in the fullest sense of the word. Don Juan lacks any such awareness; he does not seduce, he desires, and this desire has no seductive effect.¹⁸ Clearly, Don Juan deceives, but he does so unsystematically. He resorts to no enchantment, no cunning words, no stratagems, and no constant wooing; he merely takes his pleasure, but shows no wish to know or to control, and at heart no wish

to love: “In the kingdom of the man, there is always some imposture” (Lacan 1963).¹⁹ Don Juan is not a philosophical model, and nor is he a philosophical way of life; he is a failure.

The character in Kierkegaard’s new essay, Johannes, would be inconceivable without perpetual reference to his counterpart. According to Pierre Mesnard, Johannes is the best embodiment of a new aesthetic which consists in freeing oneself from the weight of destiny and in seeking from life more than an opportunity to make sweet music with one’s own heart or that of others.²⁰ This attitude on the part of Kierkegaard’s seducer is that of a new kind of man: the seducer as a happy man who feeds on his own fantasies of seduction. He focuses only on the incentive; he takes the bait, but is never caught. “The other men,” Kierkegaard says, “fall to and eat the bait the way peasants eat cucumber salad and are trapped. Only the devotee of erotic love knows how to appraise the value of the bait to put an infinite value on it. Woman has an intimation of this, and this is why there is a secret understanding between him and her” (1991).²¹

Yet this seducer, too, lacks love. The most erudite, refined seduction appears only as control, not as conversation in the fullest sense. By this stage, eroticism has become no more than an intellectual pretext, concerned not with sexual possession but with intellectual imperialism. One constraint of a certain form of eroticism is that it concentrates less on the satisfaction provided by the finest moment than on the declining hold of love in the mind of the seducer: Kierkegaard’s seducer Johannes would willingly exchange the first coitus for the first kiss; would have greater enjoyment from the pure virtualness of the wait than from the exercise of his talents. Johannes is a fake seducer; he is too little concerned with love to be a true seducer.

This takes us back, then, to the Greek view of love and persuasion. In a lecture delivered in Korea (2008), I noted that philosophy, today perhaps more than ever, confronts us with a difficult task, but it should be defined as a “constant effort to reactivate our thoughts,” what Plato termed an “engendering upon the beautiful,” an attempt to plant in the student ideas that can defend themselves and that trigger reflective activity. Thus, philosophers will earn their rewards by contributing, each in their varied and insufficient ways, to a greater knowledge of themselves, of the world they live in, and of the problems they will have to tackle. And in that eternal game in which we are all rewarded, few things are more essential to the philosopher than love and persuasion through words.

According to Raymond Sabunde, a humanist Franciscan writing in the early 15th century, “We have nothing that is really ours except love. If love is not good, then nothing we have is good; if our love is good, we are good; if it is evil, then we are evil...” (Sabunde 1988).²² Philosophy is an essential rather than professional way of life; it glorifies what makes us better humans. Not everything depends on the instrumental value of what man builds, on the material success of his life, on his logical skills, or his religious beliefs; all these are secondary matters, in that they do not give structure to man’s nature. Man is a multifaceted creature. As Gómez de Liaño reminds us: “He is not just a rational, believing being, nor just *homo faber et consumens* (man doer and consumer), for he is still no less a feeling, imagining animal; for that reason, his self-mastery, his inner harmony, in short his happiness, depend on the skill with which he manages his performances, his imagination, his feelings” (2000).²³ In his *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, Gracián equates knowledge with right intentions and that is the task of philosophy, since “Sound understanding coupled with ill will was always monstrous violence” (Gracián 2012).²⁴ Put simply, in philosophy we should aspire to an honest existence which orders, arranges and reconciles those things among our complex circumstances that shape our personal identity: What we do, then, should be a reflection of what we are.

Notes

1. This idea is crucial to Pierre Hadot's philosophy, as noted in the introduction by Arnold I. Davidson to Hadot's superb book *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, ed. A. Michel, Paris, 2003, published in English as *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, 13.

2. "Accordingly, if Helen's eye, taking pleasure in Alexander's body, transmitted to her soul, the eagerness and struggle of Love, is it any wonder?" Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 19: DK 82 B 11.

3. "He who persuaded with the word (as constrainer) did wrong; while she who was persuaded (as one constrained by means of the discourse) is wrongly blamed," Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 12: DK 82 B 11.

4. Baudrillard, more radically, argues that love is a prerequisite of seduction, rather than the reverse: "Seduction consists of finery. It weaves and enweaves appearances as Penelope weaved and enweaved her tapestry, as desire itself was woven and unwoven beneath her hand." Baudrillard, J., *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer, New World Perspectives, New York, 1990, 88.

5. Aeschylus, *Suppl.*, 1040-1.

6. Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd Boston, MIT Press, 1996, 78, introduces this idea with reference to Homer, *Il.*, XIV, 208, and the famous "Treachery of Hera," where Aphrodite "... loosed from her breasts the breastband, pierced, and alluring, with every kind of enchantment woven through it... There is the heat of Love, the pulsing rush of Longing, the lover's whisper, irresistible—magic to make the sanest man go mad. And thrusting it into Hera's outstretched hands, she breathed these words..." (Trans. Samuel Butler).

7. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 54-59 (trans. Hugh Evelyn-White).

8. Ángel Gabilondo examines this relationship in his paper "El Eros como conversación," *Edad de Oro IX. El erotismo y la literatura clásica española*. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1990, 69-80. He makes the crucial point that, particularly after 1495, the word *conversari* increasingly took on the meaning of *consort with*; as a result, the term *conversación* was widely used in the Golden Age in the sense of *carnal intercourse*. He illustrates this idea with an extract from *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas (1499).

Calixto: I would wish, mistress, that the dawn might never come, considering the glory and repose that my senses receive with the noble *conversation* of your delicate limbs.

Melibea: My lord, the enjoyment is mine; it is I who win, thanks to the incredible gift you bring on each of your visits.

9. Plato, *The Symposium*, 203d. Plato's words not only provide a description of the meaning of "Eros," but also convey a criticism of the language, of the word, as it was understood by the Sophists, and thus his censure of a characteristic feature of love: seduction.

10. Kant himself was aware of this, and quoted Plato to warn against the pitfalls of a purely theoretical-contemplative attitude: "When will you finally begin to live virtuously?" said Plato to an old man who told him he was attending classes on virtue. The point is not always to speculate, but also ultimately to think about applying our knowledge. Today, however, he who lives in conformity with what he teaches is taken for a dreamer." Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, XXIX, 8-9.

11. Ancient philosophy proposed to mankind an art of living. By contrast, modern philosophy appears above all as the construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists. Everyone is free to choose whatever philosophy he wishes, but if he is to remain faithful to ancient philosophy, as Descartes and Spinoza—for whom philosophy was the "exercise of wisdom"—still were, he will have to apply the various trends in philosophical thought as models of life to human existence, cf. Hadot, P., *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 2003, Paris. Elsewhere, Hadot adds that when philosophy is reduced to its conceptual content, and "ceases to have any bearing whatever on the philosopher's way of life," Hadot, P., 1995, 387, it undergoes an extreme alteration linked to a reflective anorexia, and as a discipline becomes no more than a formula concerned solely with pure speculation.

12. Cf. *The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon*, written some time after 330 BC by an unknown author, probably an Israelite exiled in Alexandria during the Diaspora, which warns the Jews of the depravity and moral ruin facing them if they allow themselves to be seduced by pagan cults and by Hellenistic philosophy based on hedonistic lifestyles.

13. Genesis tells us that man was the image of God: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." That being so, man's succumbing to temptation appears to be an illogical act, an act lacking in virtue, since the serpent promises man something that has already been fulfilled ("ye shall be as gods"), offering him the forbidden fruit. The problem, perhaps, is that they did not know this; and the serpent offered them—in return for their fatal disobedience—an awareness of their place in the world.

14. Cf. Perniola, M., "Logique de la séduction," *Traverses*, 18, 1980, 2.

15. Molière, *Dom Juan ou le festin de pierre*, *Oeuvres complètes*, Texte établi, présenté et annoté par Georges Couton, Paris, 1971, 59-60.

16. The offending scene appears in the "non cartonnée" version of 1682, but is omitted from the 1683 text and from subsequent versions throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Cf. Georges Couton's Introduction in Molière, *Dom Juan ou le festin de pierre*, *op. cit.*, 7.

17. His personal reactions to his only love affair, with Regine Olsen—with whom he finally broke up by means of a cold and rather obscure note, having courted her both deliberately and constantly—is one of the most shadowy chapters of his life. Perhaps he was never able to overcome the conflict he perceived between the soul and the body, the inner world and desire. Cf. Collins, J., *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, Chicago, 1953, 22-25. His inability to merge the erotic and religious sides of his nature led him into desperate situations, such as that described; see also Wahl, J., *Études Kierkegaardiennes*, Paris, 1974, 12-17.

18. Kierkegaard, S., *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*. Translated by Alastair Hannay, Abridged Version. Penguin, 1992, 65.

19. Lacan, J., Seminar 10: Anguish, Class 15, 20 March 1963, <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-10-Anxiety.pdf>>. Man is, in a certain sense, an impostor because vis-à-vis woman he always hides his limitation. For Lacan, the Don Juan myth is not a referential myth of the male world; indeed, Lacan advances the clinical thesis that Don Juan is a feminine dream. He is a feminine myth because he is a man perfectly at ease with himself, a man who lacks nothing. Don Juan never takes the initiative, but merely responds to what the feminine other desires from him. Don Juan submits to women. He submits to what Lacan calls the “*odore di femmina*” (scent of woman).
20. Mesnard, P., *Le vrai visage de Kierkegaard*, Paris, 1948, 208.
21. Kierkegaard, “In Vino Veritas,” *Stages on Life’s Way*, trans. Howard Hong, Princeton, 1991, 75. The title reflects the host’s proviso that, before speaking, his guests should “have drunk enough not to be aware of the effects of the wine.” Cf. the chapter on love’s contradictions in Larrañeta, R., *La interioridad apasionada (verdad y amor en Sören Kierkegaard)*, Salamanca, 1990, 181-97.
22. Sabunde, R., *Tratado del amor de las criaturas*, Spanish translation by Ana Martínez Arancón, Madrid, 1988.
23. Gómez de Liaño, I., *Filósofos Griegos, Videntes Judíos*, Biblioteca de Ensayo Siruela, Madrid, 2000, 343.
24. Gracián B., *El arte de la Prudencia*, ed. De Emilio Blanco, Barcelona, Planeta, 2012, & 16, 23.

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