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THE EROTIC CHARMS OF PLATONIC DISCOURSE:
MYTHMAKING, LOVE POTIONS, AND ROLE REVERSALS

A Dissertation

Submitted to McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Dana M. Trusso

May 2015

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Dana M. Trusso

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THE EROTIC CHARMS OF PLATONIC DISCOURSE:
MYTHMAKING, LOVE POTIONS, AND ROLE REVERSALS

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ABSTRACT

THE EROTIC CHARMS OF PLATONIC DISCOURSE: MYTHMAKING, LOVE POTIONS, AND ROLE REVERSALS

By

Dana M. Trusso

May 2015

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Patrick Lee Miller

Socrates engages his audience in *Phaedrus* with speeches that include revised or newly composed myths that express his theory of philosophical eros. The aim of the speeches is to generate a love for truth that spills over into dialogue. Speeches are a starting point for dialogue, just like physical attraction is the beginning of love. In the case of *Phaedrus*, the beginning of philosophy is portrayed using playful and rhetorically rich speeches that serve as “love potions” awakening the novice’s soul, and ultimately leading Phaedrus to higher rungs on the ladder of love through the palinode, a medicinal speech. It is thinking about speeches, not the speeches themselves, which moves Socrates’ student Phaedrus from the love of speeches to the love of Beauty itself. This is a stark contrast to the purpose of speechmaking for the sophist. The sophist seeks to enchant the soul, while the philosopher seeks to charm the soul into loving wisdom through stimulating discussions. Socrates also uses role reversals in the lover-beloved relationship

to model the soul's ascent, contrasting the traditional roles with the way the lover and beloved are presented in Socrates' speeches. The novice must actively recollect Beauty itself in order to ascend, rather than passively listening to speeches that provide an image of beauty. Socrates' interlocutors must move themselves up the ladder of love from their own philosophical eros; wisdom is not attained by merely being pushed all the way up the ladder of love.

DEDICATION

For my students, who keep the dialectic alive and kicking.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The birth and completion of this project was made possible through the beautiful environment fostered by my colleagues, friends, and family. Their influences gave rise to my love of philosophy as well as my dedication to pedagogy. As an undergraduate at Baylor University I first read Plato's *Symposium* under the direction of Dr. Anne-Marie Schultz, and life has not been the same since. Dr. Thèrèse Bonin nurtured that seed during my first semester at Duquesne in her elegant presentation of Plato's erotic philosophy via Plotinus. Dr. Ron Polansky afforded my first pedagogical experience as one of his teaching assistants. As nervous as I was to lecture to one hundred students, I learned that I enjoyed leading class discussion. As a reader on my committee, he was dedicated to my success. Dr. James Swindal gave me excellent feedback on teaching strategies. During my comprehensive exam, my committee member Dr. Michael Harrington gently reminded me of the differences between Pseudo-Dionysius and Plotinus, the mistake making both of us smile. Dr. Sabine Roehr of New Jersey City University and Dr. John Chaffee of LaGuardia Community College awarded me generous one-year teaching appointments in their respective departments, which provided the financial support needed for the final push of writing these past years. I am truly grateful.

So many people have supported my academic progress throughout the years, like my mother, Dorothy, who always understood and respected my thirst for knowledge and the importance of education. My husband, Luke, as my dialectical sparring partner constantly reminds me that it is not material possessions or immaterial thoughts that truly matter, but lived experience with others. I want to acknowledge my best friend and

kindred spirit, Christine Gentry, for her constant support of this project. She read almost every page, provided feedback, and kept me pursuing my goal. Christine has nurtured and made possible all of the qualities in myself I cherish most, and likewise I cherish her for her steadfast presence in my life.

Most importantly, Dr. Patrick Lee Miller challenged me in my final semester of coursework and forced me to rise to the occasion. His teaching inspired and pushed me to remember the importance of Plato's contributions in the history of philosophy. As my director, his recognition of the importance of my project strengthened my resolve, and his insights and critical eye strengthened my scholarship. This dissertation would not have been born without his Socratic midwifery! My deepest thanks for the dialectic he fostered. I look forward to continuing the conversation during the years to come.

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INTRODUCTION

ἔστι γὰρ τοῦτο τόκος ἐν καλῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν
ψυχὴν.

— Plato *Symposium* 206b7–8

In *Phaedrus*, Socrates engages a newcomer to philosophy with speeches that include revised or newly composed myths that express his theory of philosophical eros. Speeches are a starting point for dialogue, just as physical attraction is the beginning of love. Socrates becomes a mythmaker for the love of wisdom. In this dissertation, I will show that the use of rhetoric in the form of speeches imbued with mythological narratives is the strategy adopted by Socrates to cultivate philosophical eros.¹ The Platonic dialogue *Phaedrus* highlights the intersection of eros and myth for the purpose of philosophical growth, and also contains a formidable critique of sophistry. This is significant because this dialogue is constructed with a specific audience in mind: those who already love speeches.²

Socrates' aim in *Phaedrus* is to generate a love for truth in a young man who already has a love for speeches. Socrates seduces Phaedrus through charming speeches that spill over into dialogue. If philosophy is the preparation for death, Socrates'

¹ I refer here to Socrates as a character in Plato's dialogues that most likely refers to the historical Socrates, but perhaps does not represent his words and actions in an accurate way. I am not interested in entering a debate about the Socratic problem. My purpose is to examine the role of eros in Socrates' speeches situated in Plato's dialogues. For more on how Plato uses the historical Socrates as a platform for the character in his dialogues, see Peterson 2011; Irwin 2008; Kahn 2012; Prior 2006, Nails 1995.

² Speeches were an important part of civic life in ancient Athens—even walking from one place to another was an occasion for the recital of a speech (Press 2012, 27–28). Phaedrus was a special case in that he had an infamous predilection for speeches, and in *Symposium* he even inaugurates the speechmaking for the evening (178a6). The symposiasts are more than willing to comply, and Alcibiades, who is absent for the speeches, disrupts the party and gives a speech of his own (212e2). Many other interlocutors in Plato's dialogues were not as in love with speeches as Phaedrus was. For example, Chaerephon from *Charmides* is obviously enamored more with Charmides's body than any speech he could give, or his soul for that matter—a fact that bothers Socrates to no end (154d).

seductive speeches are preparation for dialectical discussions.³ I assert that Socrates' use of rhetoric in his charming and mythologically heavy speeches is demarcated from the realm of sophistry. Unlike the use of rhetoric by the sophists for the crowd's instant gratification, like the ladder of love in *Symposium*, the preparation of the soul is a long and gradual process. There are necessary steps that one must take in order to reach the end goal: truth via Forms. The first step is desiring truth, the second step knowing the difference between images of truth and truth itself, and the third is engaging in rigorous dialectics to access the Forms.⁴ Dialectical discussions aid the soul's ascent to Beauty itself, and are fueled by philosophical eros that trains the soul to seek and recognize truth—a truth that ultimately transcends discourse.⁵ In this dissertation I focus on the first step, while mentioning the other two steps in reference to how effective philosophical eros is in redirecting the receptive novice towards Beauty itself, the Form central in Plato's erotic philosophy.⁶

³ Plato *Phaedo* 64a. All subsequent references to Plato's *Phaedo* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997. When using the term "dialectic," I refer to the method of reasoning carefully and systematically using the opposition (whether hypothetically or the partner's position) as a platform for understanding the topic at hand and testing the position for weaknesses. The goal is to access Forms. Nails writes that dialectic, "whether elenctic, psychagogic, or some other form" is different than other methods of inquiry in that it "reincorporates responses to determine each successive move in the process" (Nails 1995, 200). In Plato's *Phaedo* 101d–102a, Socrates describes the dialectic as examining the two sides of a hypothesis carefully and separately, without "jumbling" up the positions (101d–102a).

⁴ Plato *Sophist* 230d. All subsequent references to Plato's *Sophist* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997. Nehamas adds, "Even in Plato's own eyes, the elenctic method is not sufficient to distinguish clearly between Socratic and sophistic inquiry" (13). Alexander Nehamas, "Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (Vol 7 No. 1 (1990), 3–16).

⁵ In *Republic*, Plato says that dialectical discussion aims to "arrive through reason at the being of each thing itself, and does not give up until he grasps what Good itself is with understanding itself" which leads to individual to "reach the end of the intelligible realm" (532a6–b1). The soul's ascent is made possible by the "practice of the crafts we mentioned that have the power to lead the best part of the soul upward until it sees the best among the things that are" (532c4–d1). Texts for all subsequent references to Plato's *Republic* are from C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing), 2004.

⁶ Although Diotima substitutes the word "good" for "beautiful" in *Symposium*, when commonly referring to what we feel an erotic attraction to, beauty is usually broached before goodness (Plato *Symposium* 204e1).

The aim of the philosopher is in stark contrast to the purpose of speechmaking for the sophist, who seeks to enchant the soul for his own personal gain, whether money, honor, or other lower desires—victory trumps truth in this case.⁷ In contrast, the philosopher seeks to charm the soul into loving wisdom through stimulating discussions for the purpose of both self and others pursuing truth. Victory, in the philosophical sense, is twofold: it is not winning a debate or prize, rather finding the truth and inspiring others to know the difference between the appearance of truth and truth itself so they too can find the truth.⁸ Dialectic is the method best suited to uncovering truth.⁹ Socrates is competitive in the sense that he is competing to lead the souls of the youth through what he understands is a superior method—philosophy. “Indeed, it is precisely by designating certain modes of discourse and spheres of activity as ‘anti-philosophical,’” Andrea Nightingale asserts, “that Plato was able to create a separate identity for ‘philosophy.’”¹⁰ It is important for Socrates, and Plato through the character of Socrates, to draw out the differences between philosophy and sophistry.

Socrates also exploits the ancient Athenian practice of the lover-beloved

⁷ Gregory Vlastos explains that in contrast to the sophists, the aim of Socrates’ method of cross-examination (*elenchus*) is “in principle a method of searching for truth, which eristics is not, but only a method (or set of methods—a whole bag of tricks) for winning arguments, regardless of whether or not you take what you are arguing for to be true” (31). Gregory Vlastos, “The Socratic Elenchus,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (Vol. 1 1983, 27–58).

⁸ Plato *Gorgias* 458a. Texts for all subsequent references to Plato’s *Gorgias* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

⁹ Plato defines dialectic as “a method of argument which aims at the discovery of the real nature of things and is not guided by those merely verbal distinctions which at best indicate how the world appears to us (*R.* 454a–c, *Tht.* 164c–d).” Nehamas continues to explain that Plato “insists that the real nature of things is constituted by the Forms in which these things participate.” The philosopher who “studies the Forms [...] and the sophist now do something fundamentally different and in different ways” (Nehamas 1990, 11–12).

¹⁰ Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10–11.

relationship as expressed in both dialogues.¹¹ This relationship provided an educational setting for the aristocratic Athenian youth. They would partner with an older, established man who would teach the youth how to be a successful and virtuous citizen. The relationship also involved the older male, the *erastēs*, using his beloved boy as a source of sexual stimulation. The way Socrates uses the lover-beloved relationship in his speeches provides an implicit critique of the practice, specifically the way in which the boy experiences love passively instead of actively. In other words, Socrates is trying to show that we are all lovers, with Beauty as our ultimate beloved.

I argue that Plato makes Socrates a mythmaker in order to charm his audience. Plato constructs dialogues with vivid characters, enchanting myths, and provocative concepts in order to seduce his audience—both the internal characters like Phaedrus and the external readers of the dialogue. Taken literally myth provides superficial explanations for various phenomena. Beyond the literal interpretation are the many avenues towards ascent. For example, myth “brings us to a point where philosophical recollection is possible” as Daniel Werner argues, but “it is through nonmythical means that the process must find its ultimate fulfillment.”¹² If philosophical thinking is going to

¹¹ C.D.C. Reece explains: “As a man who loves boys in an idiosyncratic, because elenctic, way, Socrates is placed in potential conflict with the norms of a particular Athenian institution, that of *paidēraistia*—the socially regulated intercourse between an older Athenian male (*erastēs*) and a teenage boy (*erōmenos*, *pais*), through which the latter was supposed to learn virtue. And the potential, as we know, was realized with tragic consequences—in 399, Socrates was found guilty of corrupting the young men of Athens and condemned to death. (*Plato on Love: Lysis, Symposium, Phaedrus, Alcibiades with Selections from Republic and Laws*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006, xxi).

¹² Daniel S. Werner, *Myth and Philosophy in Plato’s Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 107.

occur in this context, dialectical reasoning must follow Socrates' mythical tales.¹³

Philosophical discussions initiate the examination of difficult questions while nurturing a passion for discovering the answers. In other words, the love of wisdom expressed as philosophical eros sustains rational thought directed at the Forms.

Speeches are a starting point for dialogue. If Socrates did not lure Phaedrus through the enchantment of *logos*, which attracts the young man so strongly, Phaedrus would most likely walk away from philosophical discussions about speeches. If physical attraction is the beginning of love, for Phaedrus a beautiful speech opens up the possibility for something far greater, by pursuing what speeches ultimately should aim for—the truth available through the Forms. Socrates' speeches are the intersection of eros and wisdom: philosophical eros means that one love something enough to think deeply about it.

Plato's multilayered speeches allow the philosophical novice as well as the professional philosopher, and everyone in between, to delight in both reading and thinking about these charming discourses. This delight is ultimately caused not just by seductive language or ideas, but an attraction to what transcends discourse itself—the Form of Beauty. Philosophical eros ultimately is the passionate desire for Beauty itself. The soul is attracted to Beauty, but cannot necessarily distinguish the appearance of beauty from true Beauty. To do this requires dialectical ascent, i.e., to gradually learn to recognize true knowledge requires a training of the mind (what Plato calls recollection) to

¹³ Utilizing myth in an educational setting without reflecting on its greater meaning would be like a philosophy professor who asks his students to memorize the steps of Plato's allegory of the cave, but does not initiate a discussion about the meaning behind the literal interpretation. Some students get lost in the details by asking questions like, "Who imprisoned them? Who made their chains? Who gave birth to the prisoners? Is there an evil wizard? Does the liberated prisoner get a sunburn when he basks in the sun too long?"

examine the legitimacy of a variety of opinions. In order to start this process one must first recognize an intellectual lack, and desire to fill it with wisdom. Ascent is the activity of dialectical reasoning proceeding correctly toward the Forms. According to Plato's *Phaedrus* and Socrates' speech in *Symposium*, the soul flourishes when dialectical reasoning is paired with eros.

For my purposes, I focus on the Platonic dialogues that show the intersection between philosophical eros, charming speeches employing myth, and a context involving an audience of speech-lovers who have the potential to transform into wisdom-lovers.¹⁴ In both *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, the character Phaedrus acts as the quintessential lover of speech who is also a beloved, thus youthful and impressionable, whereas Alcibiades, who bookends the speeches at Agathon's symposium, represents unfulfilled potential.¹⁵ Alcibiades mistakenly believes he can satisfy his erotic longings inspired by Socrates by loving Socrates instead of loving the pursuit of wisdom. Phaedrus remains focused on the more abstract beauty of *logos* in speeches. Other relevant Platonic dialogues are mentioned, such as *Republic*, *Charmides*, and *Gorgias* but only briefly and in reference to ideas introduced in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*.

In *Phaedrus*, Socrates' shift from speechmaking to dialogue uncovers the nature of Platonic love: an erotic attraction that gradually transforms from the love of images of

¹⁴ For a fascinating account of how allegorical interpretation of myth in philosophy evolved from interpreting Homeric myths. Gerard Naddaf, "Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy" in *Logos and Mythos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 99–132.

¹⁵ Phaedrus is also present in Plato's *Protagoras* 315a–316a, along with many others such as Charmides and Alcibiades, as well as fellow symposiasts Eryximachus, Agathon, and Pausanias. Also noteworthy is that Alcibiades is present in the following Platonic dialogues: *Protagoras*, *Symposium*, *Euthydemus*, *Alcibiades I*, and *Alcibiades II*, and mentioned in *Gorgias* (Socrates' describes Alcibiades as his object of love along with philosophy (481d), and Socrates refers to him as his friend (519b1). Lysias is present in *Phaedrus* and *Republic*.

beauty to the love of Beauty itself.¹⁶ The dialogue begins as Phaedrus and Socrates walk outside the city walls, and find a shady place by a stream to converse about love.¹⁷ Phaedrus reads a speech he originally tucked away, hidden from Socrates. Lysias's speech sounds suspiciously tailored for Phaedrus—a potential beloved—or other handsome, young, impressionable youth. The speech argues that it is better to choose to associate with non-lovers over lovers.¹⁸ The speech is flimsy and unconvincing, both rhetorically and philosophically, especially since the way Lysias defines love is on a purely physical basis. At the close, Phaedrus is beaming with pride and asks what Socrates thinks of the speech; Socratic irony follows.¹⁹ When Socrates explains the redundancy and cursory nature of Lysias's speech, Phaedrus responds, “You are absolutely wrong, Socrates. That is in fact the best thing about the speech.”²⁰ At this point in their exchange, Phaedrus is too emotionally tied to the speech to doubt its perfection and engage in a meaningful discussion, so Socrates agrees to Phaedrus's (aggressive) request for an improved speech.

Socrates purports to improve Lysias's speech by avoiding redundancy, but his speech fails to make a strong case because it examines the disadvantages associated with having a lover while never mentioning the advantages of a non-lover.²¹ Socrates' first speech also rests on Lysias's assumption that the “lover is less sane than the non-lover,” a

¹⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 257c. After Socrates' second speech—referred to as the palinode because it retracts the treatment of love from his first speech—he transitions to a dialogue by asking Phaedrus what a speechwriter aims to do. All subsequent references to Plato's *Phaedrus* are from *Phaedrus*, translated with notes by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995).

¹⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 227a–230e.

¹⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 230e5–234c5.

¹⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 234d. I imagine Socrates says this with all the enthusiasm of a “non-lover,” i.e., in a completely monotone voice: “It's a miracle, my friend; I'm in ecstasy.”

²⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 235b1.

²¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 237a6–241d3.

claim that he will agree with in the second speech through a reversal of the negative connotation into a positive one.²² Both Lysias's written speech and Socrates' impromptu speech claim that the beloved should take a lover who does not love him because a non-lover is more sane, rational, and in control of his physical appetites than a lover. However, as the palinode and Socrates' speech in *Symposium* point out, it is only through love (properly understood as philosophical eros) that the soul is able to ascend to the form of Beauty and promote the individual's own excellence through rational thought and self-control. Unfortunately, Phaedrus is more than happy to play with these "dead images" and stillborn speeches.²³ Socrates' goal is to make Phaedrus aware of his misdirected love and give him the opportunity to direct his desire toward a more worthy object so that play is turned into serious love. Phaedrus must take this step on his own as a self-mover, with Socrates as the charming midwife coaching him through the challenging process.

Socrates constructs the palinode as a speech imbued with myth to aid Phaedrus's transition from opinion to true knowledge.²⁴ Mary Margaret McCabe remarks that the way Plato writes is "indissoluble from what he is trying to say."²⁵ Plato appropriates mythological tales and transforms them into a philosophically significant discussion on the nature of love and learning. The memorable interweaving of myth into the palinode provides answers to questions raised in both Lysias's speech and Socrates' first speech, while generating many questions of its own for the attentive listener. This speech is

²² Plato *Phaedrus* 236b1.

²³ Kathryn Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Pre-Socratics to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 228.

²⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 244a–257b.

²⁵ Mary Margaret McCabe, "Plato's Ways of Writing" in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. By Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 88–113), 89.

organized into four main topics: 1) the nature of eros as divine madness, 2) the nature of the soul, 3) the movement of the soul explained as ascent and descent in response to Beauty itself, and 4) the movement of humans as embodied souls in response to eros within the lover-beloved relationship. Each of these four topics is crafted to lead Phaedrus's soul from the lower desire for beautiful speeches to the higher desire for Beauty itself. Ascent is possible if, by Phaedrus falling in love with Socrates' charming speech he has a strong desire to examine it further, whereby Socrates initiates discussing why speeches attract Phaedrus and what speeches do to his soul. Phaedrus must look within and gauge his own soul over and against each of the above topics by asking self-reflective questions like: Have I experienced divine madness? (Phaedrus does seem "mad" about speeches.) What is the nature of my soul? Is my soul ascending to the source of my madness and thereby flying high, and how does this reflect my relationship as a passive beloved? Based on my eros directed at beautiful speeches, is my soul flourishing or floundering?

What follows from the series of three speeches is the most philosophically significant part of the dialogue—the discussion about speeches, speechmaking, and more specifically rhetoric.²⁶ The last few pages of the dialogue are devoted to a discussion of the nature of writing versus thinking about writings couched within the myth of Theuth and Thamus.²⁷ Plato cautions Phaedrus that writing and reading are not the same as thinking—advice that the reader of Plato's dialogues can take away as well. *Phaedrus* is meant to serve as the *platon* tree next to the stream, i.e., as a beautiful environment that lures one into intellectually stimulating discussions on the various topics broached in the

²⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 257c–274b5.

²⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 278b.

dialogue, whether it is the soul, eros, education, language, or writing. *Phaedrus*, as a work of art, is the image of wisdom but not wisdom itself. It is, however, an accurate enough image of beauty to inspire a yearning for philosophical discussions that gets one closer to Beauty itself. Platonic dialogues provide a beautiful environment, cultivating the philosophical eros necessary to give birth to wisdom. The environment is not the end in itself, it is the means to the end. Plato's dialogues are like the body in that we are initiated into the ways of eros when we first fall in love (with a romantic partner or with a dialogue), but always for the love of what lies beyond the sensual and charming.

In this dissertation I use the analogy of the ladder of love in *Symposium* to explain further how speeches are the starting point for dialogue. The speeches of *Symposium* begin with Phaedrus enthusiastically turning the drinking party into a celebration of love through speeches. Phaedrus is on his way to loving the Forms, but he must learn to love the pursuit of wisdom through dialectical reasoning in the same passionate way that he loves the rhetorical flourishes involved in the speeches that drift through Athens like the song of summer cicadas.²⁸ The speeches end with Alcibiades' disruption and his speech about Socrates. What is the connection between Phaedrus's speeches in *Phaedrus* and Alcibiades' solicitation of Socrates at the end of *Symposium*? What is the cause of Phaedrus's attraction to speeches? Why does Alcibiades want to seduce Socrates? The answer to these questions stems from that which truly attracts the soul: the Form of Beauty. The love of wisdom expressed through dialogue is the next rung on the ladder ascending closer to this goal. The sophist remains stuck on the lower rungs of the ladder

²⁸ Cf. Plato *Apology* 23c. The youth of Athens are speech-lovers in that "they enjoy listening to people being cross-examined" and begin imitating the Socratic method "of their own accord," where they discover that most people do not have the knowledge they claim they have. All subsequent references to Plato's *Apology* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

of love because he never directs his desire away from the lower pleasures to the higher pleasures found via philosophical eros.

Phaedrus, so full of potential, begins the speechmaking endeavor, and Alcibiades, who once was also so full of potential, ends the speeches on a note of the failure of philosophical eros to take hold of his soul. Alcibiades remains on the lower rungs of the ladder of love, blaming Socrates for his frustration. Alcibiades represents the descent of the soul. He was unable to train his horses to follow the rational rule of the charioteer, and therefore is not able to climb the ladder of love toward Beauty Itself. Will Phaedrus succumb to the same fate?²⁹ Socrates' pedagogical strategy takes into account the need to persuade the novice that the "unexamined life is not worth living," even when that persuasion involves constructing speeches imbued with mythology.³⁰

Persuasion does not mean that you convince someone that your interpretation is correct, but that they care about the subject and desire to know the truth of the matter. Plotinus criticizes Heraclitus for only speaking in metaphors that "have left us guessing, since he has neglected to make clear to us what he is saying," but realizes that was "perhaps because we ought to seek by ourselves, as [Heraclitus] himself sought and found."³¹ Although Heraclitus could have written in a clearer format, he does not for worthy pedagogical reasons. One gains knowledge of a subject by experiencing it rather than listening to a description of it. Werner argues that neither "myth nor any other form of discourse could serve as an adequate teaching instrument," and insists that Plato would

²⁹ Although Phaedrus is associated with the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries in 415, and fled into exile, he was not charged with desecrating the herms. For a detailed account see Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 223–234. Cf. Nussbaum 1986 for a different view of Phaedrus.

³⁰ Plato *Apology* 38a.

³¹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Loeb Classic Library 443. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), IV.8 (1), 397.

not believe the myths he writes are true accounts of such thing as the Forms.³² Werner argues that Plato's myth in *Phaedrus* points to the limits of language. On this point I believe that Werner understands the nature of the dialogue format, especially when he explains the limitations of language “do not mean that the philosopher ought to leave behind or move beyond all discourse. Far from it, for in our incarnate state discourse is both essential and unavoidable [...] At its best, philosophical discourse—dialectic—can serve as a kind of *provocation*.”³³ I endeavor to illustrate that the goal of Socrates as a mythmaker is not to provide the ultimate nature of reality, but to provoke his audience to think about the possibilities in a philosophical sense while providing a mythological narrative closer to reality than existing myths.

Kathryn Morgan states, “myth stands for and exaggerates the problematic aspects of language.”³⁴ In *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Socrates is engaging specifically speech-lovers. Phaedrus and Alcibiades, as well as the other symposiasts, revel in *logos*. In this sense, the myths Plato constructs or revises do not merely “refer to themselves and to the limitations of mythical discourse,” but serve as “a tool for methodological awareness.”³⁵ Werner understands what I believe is the greatest difference between a speech from a sophist and from a philosopher: the sophist leaves no room for questioning and thus less potential for self-knowledge.

For example, in *Phaedrus* Lysias's speech provides a cursory list of reasons a boy should devote himself to a nonlover rather than a lover by highlighting the disadvantages of being with a lover who is driven by appetite, and the advantages of being with a non-

³² Werner 2012, 95.

³³ Werner 2012, 99.

³⁴ Morgan 2000, 2.

³⁵ Werner 2012, 97.

lover who is driven by reason and self-control. Lysias's speech, as told by Phaedrus, ends thus, "Well, I think this speech is long enough. If you are still longing for more, if you think I have passed over something, just ask."³⁶ Lysias does not articulate a definition of love, nor can he therefore discuss whether this definition is accurate; consequently, he seems unsure whether he has proved his point with strong support. Ironically, Lysias has passed over an examination of the idea that is really interesting and has the most importance: love. Lysias also passes over any counterclaims concerning the disadvantages of a nonlover or the advantages of a lover. Phaedrus does not notice this omission, but instead replies, "Don't you think it's simply superb, especially in its choice of words."³⁷ The sophist's speech does not provoke or invite critical reflection; it demands assent. The sophist concerns himself with pure charm—does the speech sound strong and conform to the standard format accepted by other speechmakers? In doing so, the sophist instructs his pupils to imitate him on his unreflective path.

Socrates' palinode, by contrast, invites the reader to reflect on a myriad of philosophical questions. Socrates himself invites Phaedrus to examine the strengths and weaknesses of rhetoric after the speech, although Phaedrus, disappointingly, seems to have assented to Socrates' claims for the sole reason that Socrates was able to give a rousing speech and put Lysias's speech to shame. Sophists follow the standard laws governing a "good speech" without understanding why these standards are accepted as producing good speeches. They are like someone who follows societal laws without questioning whether the laws are right. Socrates' palinode is different because, as Morgan notes, Socrates uses myth as "philosophical rhetoric" that helps push "Phaedrus from a

³⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 234c5.

³⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 234c.

life of superficiality, based on thoughtless acceptance of rhetorical and social convention, to a life of philosophy that analyses the relationship of these conventions with the truth.³⁸ Socrates provides an avenue of beneficial change (ascent) for Phaedrus; it is Phaedrus's responsibility alone whether or not to choose to turn his life around. Socrates' use of myth invites Phaedrus and Alcibiades, along with other speech-lovers and the readers of Plato's dialogues, to begin to question the nature of speeches, language, and truth itself. Mythmaking is not the only avenue to this goal, as dialectic serves the same purpose of answering challenging questions and generating even more penetrating analysis. However, for some speech-lovers like Phaedrus the first step towards philosophical reflection involves charming tales that inspire reflection. Subsequently, dialectical exchanges that delve deeper into the truth of the matter are made possible because of the profound passion for understanding that thinking about those beautiful speeches generated.

Plato's use of myth directly appeals to philosophical novices because it does not attempt to engage them using rational argumentation. The philosophical novice or "non-philosopher," as Werner says, will not "spontaneously move himself toward philosophy" because he does not know that he grasps only images and not true knowledge.³⁹ Given that rational discussions do not interest the non-philosopher, Werner continues that "the remaining option is to find a mode of discourse that is suited to an internally discordant soul."⁴⁰ The mode of discourse that is best suited to engage the novice is myth because the philosophical message hidden in mythological ascent narratives "targets especially

³⁸ Morgan 2000, 229.

³⁹ Werner 2012, 123.

⁴⁰ Werner 2012, 123.

those readers who have the potential to become philosophers, but who have not yet actualized that potential.”⁴¹ Instead of enjoying the myth in the palinode for its charms alone, the philosopher hopes to turn the philosophical novice towards understanding that the subsequent discourses on myth are the most charming *logos* of all, as well as to fulfill the higher purpose of turning the non-philosopher to the love of wisdom. Sometimes a story is told to entertain, but it can also be a means to instruct and “lead the soul” as in *psychagōgia*.⁴² Socrates leads the soul by understanding what interests the novice based on what he currently loves, and using that to construct the most charming mode of communication—in the case of Phaedrus and many other Athenians, their interest in speeches surpasses their love of wisdom. Myth is specifically potent because it allows the audience to reflect on how the myth applies to their own life, spurring self-knowledge.

Morgan points to the two major interpretations of myth in philosophy: 1) Myth designed to add charm to otherwise difficult or overly technical ideas, or the “honeyed cup” theory⁴³ and 2) that myth points to a knowledge beyond discourse in mystical terms by “hinting at the nature of the world inhabited by the Platonic forms and the disembodied soul.”⁴⁴ Although she is more in line with the second, she rallies against interpreting myth categorically and instead wishes to understand the nature of myth within the philosophical context in all of its complexities and nuances.

So which of these two theories does Socrates’ use of myth in his charming speeches fall under? In *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* Plato does not need to use speeches

⁴¹ Werner 2012, 123.

⁴² Plato *Phaedrus* 261a7–8, 271c9. For discussions on *psychagōgia* see Asmis 1986, 154; Moss 2013; and Yunis 2011, 12–13, 183.

⁴³ A reference to Lucretius’ introduction to *On the Nature of Things*. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Martin Ferguson Smith (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), 1.931–50.

⁴⁴ Morgan 2000, 2–5.

imbued with myth to “brim around the cup with the sweet juice and yellow of the honey.”⁴⁵ The audience—Phaedrus and the symposiasts, respectively—broach the topic of eros, not Socrates. His audience is already inclined to listen to speeches on love, so it is not the topic that needs sweetening. A second interpretation could be that Socrates is sweetening the revelation of the *true* nature of love, which surpasses the realm of the senses for a more abstract understanding of the soul’s attraction and recollection of the form of Beauty. This makes more sense. However, I do not believe that Socrates’ revelation is one that would make a person shudder in revulsion, but it is a radically different understanding on a topic about which everyone seems to be an “expert.” This is not similar to Lucretius, who believes that his philosophy needs sweetening because the “doctrine seems in general somewhat woeful unto those who’ve had it not in hand, and the crowd starts back from it in horror.”⁴⁶ Is the knowledge that eros is ultimately the erotic attraction to the form of Beauty itself like “wormwood’s bitter draught” and such a hard pill to swallow? It is puzzling and provocative, but I am not convinced that it is as harsh or foul as this metaphor implies.

Instead, the challenge for Socrates is to sustain his audience’s interest long enough to engage them in a discussion on the speeches. The speeches are honeyed with myth not because the topic is too difficult to handle, but to inspire and sustain a curiosity about the myth that reaches into the realm of dialectics. Myth is medicinal in that at best it opens up the audience to the possibility of critical reflection on how they understand and apply eros to their lives currently, which leads to self-knowledge. With this awareness, they can better understand how their souls respond to eros and what the best

⁴⁵ Lucretius 2001, 30.

⁴⁶ Lucretius 2001, 30.

object of eros is for the sake of their souls. By participating in philosophical discussion on love, the audience is “not merely duped, but rather thus grow strong again with recreated health.”⁴⁷ In this sense Socrates’ vivid myths are delightful medicine that “if by such method haply I might hold the mind of thee upon these lines of ours,” or is Socrates’ case, to hold them long enough after the speeches to engage in philosophical discussions.⁴⁸ The speeches are charming (honeyed), and the way Socrates hints at something beyond the discourse (Beauty itself) is mysterious enough to inspire a desire to understand the nature of eros in a more reflective way. Therefore, the way that Socrates employs charming myths in his speeches corresponds to both interpretations of myth in philosophy Morgan provided, with the addition of inspiring philosophical eros in the souls of the audience members so that they may unlock the mysteries of eros for themselves.

The significance of myth in Plato’s dialogues is how to use myth to illuminate the complex nature of the soul’s ascent in response to eros. The myths serve as a way to illustrate the lack of knowledge in the mind of the novice critical thinker, and the need to investigate the issue further. As Anne-Marie Schultz points out, “Socrates’ narrative voice functions as eros itself does, as a force that moves the soul toward communion with the Good.”⁴⁹ There are many levels of interpretation available to the reader of Plato’s works, specifically made possible by the dialogue format as it highlights the role of eros in the soul. For example, the Socratic method dazzles (and frustrates) the philosophical novice reading a Platonic dialogue for the first time. Perhaps she desires to learn more

⁴⁷ Lucretius 2001, 30.

⁴⁸ Lucretius 2001, 30.

⁴⁹ Anne-Marie Schultz, *Plato’s Socrates as Narrator: A Philosophical Muse* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 3.

about the topics introduced by the character Socrates, while also practicing his method in other areas of interest.⁵⁰ The professional philosopher interprets the text in a similar way, but could look more closely at how Socrates charms the novice reader/interlocutor into sustaining an interest in knowledge, specifically self-knowledge. One can read the dialogues as a way to understand the self by learning to ask the right questions, or one could read the dialogues to learn how to inspire her students to seek self-knowledge. Both are different viewpoints by which one could interpret Socrates' charming speeches.

An example of the many levels of interpretation within the dialogues themselves is how Socrates uses himself as a model of erotic ascent in Diotima's account of the ladder of love in *Symposium*. Instead of giving a speech as himself, he characterizes himself as the youth listening to a great prophetess teach him about the art of love. In this sense, the reader is listening to the speech of Diotima from the perspective of Socrates. Another perspective is that of the character who is presented as foolish or lacking wisdom, like Phaedrus, or one who fails to transform into a wisdom-lover, like Alcibiades. Instead of interpreting Socrates' method as a failure based on these puzzling characters, which would end the conversation, the captivated reader looks beyond the outcomes of Phaedrus and Alcibiades and begins to ask questions regarding the characters' personal weaknesses, then developing answers that could perhaps bring more self-mastery into the reader's own life.⁵¹ Discussing the shortcomings of Phaedrus and Alcibiades—colorful characters in Plato's charming dialogues—brings us one step closer to discussing the shortcomings within our own souls, which is a much more challenging

⁵⁰ Or perhaps she returns the book at the end of the semester to receive her refund.

⁵¹ This task is modeled by Socrates in *Phaedrus*. After Phaedrus and Socrates give their respective speeches, the two discuss the advantages and disadvantages of speeches, rhetoric, and writing (Plato *Phaedrus* 257c–279c).

task. To love Plato's dialogues because of Socrates' enchanting speeches is the starting point for self-knowledge and philosophical reflection, whereas the uninterested reader reaches the boundaries of the speech and does not discuss it further.⁵²

This dissertation moves through Plato's *Phaedrus* according to the ascent narrative expressed in the ladder of love from *Symposium*. In Chapter 1, I show how myth and play serve to open up the novice intellectually, and leads his soul to love wisdom. Every ending needs a beginning. In the case of Plato's erotic dialogues, the beginnings of philosophy are portrayed as playful and rhetorically rich speeches that serve as a "love potion" to awaken the novice's soul. Philosophy is compared to an enchantment or potion because Socrates brings the novice into a beautiful environment for the soul to dialectically "play" as the starting point for philosophy. The next step of this philosophical journey is the charmed soul choosing to embrace philosophical eros instead of bodily eros. The expression of philosophical eros is rich philosophical discussions. The end of the journey is falling in love with divine Forms reaching contemplation of Beauty Itself. Many of Socrates' myths reflect the gradual movement from the erotic beginning imbued with seduction and persuasion to the end of philosophy that transcends all discourse as the mind communes with Beauty itself. In *Symposium*, revealing the ladder of love is how the prophetess Diotima initiates Socrates into the art of loving young boys. In *Phaedrus*, the charioteer analogy, in its vivid portal of the ascent and descent of the soul, sparks the discussion after the palinode. Socrates sweetens the prospect of philosophical discussion by constructing the myth of the cicadas after Phaedrus agrees to

⁵² Thrasymachus is an example of a character, or "antiphilosopher" as Griswold calls him, who is unwilling to truly think about justice once he voices his personal opinion (Griswold, 1988), 166). He is not attracted by philosophical eros to the Forms, but is instead pulled by the weight of his own his love of honor and money as much as he is attracted to his own opinions (Plato *Republic* 338d–341a, 343a–344c).

talk about speeches. The cicada myth mirrors the charioteer analogy's ascent narrative.⁵³

What the myths in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* have in common are the use of eros to arouse philosophical eros. This dissertation seeks to follow Socrates' ascent myths as he leads the soul towards philosophy by inciting philosophical eros using rhetorically rich speeches and vivid myths. It traces the goal of ascent as the self-controlled soul returning to the divine in contemplation.

Chapter 2 examines how sophistry is also compared to a potion, but a potion that awakens the soul without a method of ascent and the soul starts on an aimless, sometimes dangerous journey. The structure of *Phaedrus* reflects how Socrates leads the soul from speeches to dialogue, which expresses the turn from a lower understanding of love to a higher one in pursuit of Beauty itself. Dialogue is the best vehicle to the Forms, while rhetoric and written speeches do not properly lead the soul. In this chapter I will show that a vital part of Plato's philosophical eros is the use of charming speeches as a type of love potion. The speeches are *psychagōgic* (soul-leading) and *pharmakon* (potions) meant to transform the love of speeches to the love of wisdom. Socrates' *psychagōgic pharmakon* act especially as a response to sophistry. A sophist persuades the crowd with charming speeches that do not necessarily provide truth, only the image of truth. The sophist utilizes rhetoric to persuade, while not actually pursuing what is good, noble, or true. The philosopher uses informed dialectic to pursue precisely those things for which rhetoric can only provide appearances. The move from loving speeches to loving self-knowledge via discussion of speeches is Socrates' pedagogical strategy to gradually lead *Phaedrus* out of the lower rungs of reality and toward the highest rung of Beauty itself.

⁵³ The allegory of the cave from Plato's *Republic* is as well, but will not be dealt with in as much detail as the ones mentioned above, which are the primary concern for my argument.

Chapter 3 argues that the soul's self-motion is the conceptual hinge that connects Socrates' charming speeches and the novice's ascent. The motion is fueled by philosophical eros, like the horses that power a chariot's movement. If the soul were a passive receptacle that ascended to Beauty itself when properly filled with virtue by a teacher, then the lover-beloved model of education would function well. However, if the soul must actively move itself towards wisdom and cannot be compelled by force, then the lover-beloved relationship is not the best educational model. Socrates provides an alternative model that takes into consideration the nature of the soul as essentially self-moving in order to explain the subsequent role of philosopher-educators. The best educator acts as a midwife by creating charming speeches that help the student give birth to ideas; the educator acts as a *daimōnic* architect as he constructs a beautiful environment in between wisdom and ignorance that opens up the novice to self-reflection and dialectical exchanges. The mythological narratives I use to illuminate Plato's use of self-motion in the soul's ascent are the charioteer analogy in *Phaedrus* and the description of eros as a *daimōn* in *Symposium*. Eros as the intermediary messenger between the immortal and mortal pursues Beauty itself, and the goal of the charioteer is to rise to the rim of heaven to peep at the Forms, Beauty itself among them. The question is: does Beauty move the soul towards itself, or does the soul move itself to the source of its attraction?

In Chapter 4 I argue that the soul as self-mover is illuminated by the charioteer myth in *Phaedrus* and Alcibiades' disruption after Socrates' speech in *Symposium*. These passages invite the interlocutor to reflect on the relationship between lover and beloved and their attraction to Beauty itself. In both dialogues, Socrates uses role reversals in the

lover-beloved relationship to model the soul's ascent. In the ladder of love and charioteer procession, the myth vividly portrays an erotic tale of self-ascent through actively participating in dialectics that strengthen the soul's capacity to move itself (with an erotic push from Socrates) towards Beauty itself via dialectically inspired contemplation. For example, Zeus represents the lover and Ganymede the beloved in Socrates' retelling of the myth. The *daimōnic* power of philosophy is personified as Eros, mythologized as Pan, and embodied as Socrates. I apply Plato's idea of self-motion to the vivid examples of the soul overcoming the physical appetites of the dark horse in *Phaedrus*, as well as to the example of someone who is not able to overcome his lower appetites—Alcibiades in *Symposium*.

To conclude, I provide one final account of how Socrates' speeches invite Phaedrus to transform his life by recollecting Beauty itself. The prayers that are scattered about *Phaedrus* serve as signposts for Phaedrus's ascent, and reminders of the worthiness of philosophy to care for his soul as philosophical eros awakens recollection of the Forms. Socrates is providing Phaedrus with a gentle reminder of the lessons gathered from their day spent together under the *platon* tree, which culminates in the last myth. The final myth of *Phaedrus* is Socrates' critique of writing, which should make the reader of Plato's dialogues uneasy. Plato is reminding us that we are reading about the benefits of dialectical reasoning, and are not actually participating in it. It is as if he is cautioning us not to fall prey to the comforting notion that all answers lie in books. The speeches of *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* are the potion that induces the labor of dialogue, with Socratic elenchus as the midwife of self-movers, coaching the birth of dialogue.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Plato *Theaetetus* 160e.

Reading is not enough; *thinking* and *discussing* ideas allows the soul to ascend.

CHAPTER 1

CONJURING PHILOSOPHICAL ENCHANTMENTS:

MYTH AND PLAY

Could this be the very spot?
The stream is lovely, pure and clear:
just right for girls to be playing nearby.

— Plato *Phaedrus* 229b6–8

To entice Phaedrus, Socrates must give him something to play with that will stimulate his interest. As a speech-lover, Phaedrus is attracted to the *logos* version of eye-candy. It becomes clear from the speech he rehearses and the speech he demands from Socrates that he passionately enjoys speeches, but does not reflect on their content in a serious way. Socrates' aim is to construct a compelling speech that so enchants Phaedrus that he wants to stay with it longer than the duration of the speech; that Phaedrus will be open to playing with the ideas the speech generates long enough to spur serious philosophical reflection. The setting of the dialogue promotes Socrates' aim and functions as a third character present in the dialogue alongside Phaedrus and Socrates.

1.1 Setting the Stage to Seduce a Lover of Speeches

Socrates and Phaedrus walk outside the walls of Athens and find a lovely place to “get [their] feet wet” together.¹ The playful and flirtatious tone of the dialogue is set when Socrates asked what Phaedrus was holding underneath his cloak.² Socrates' playfulness helps the reader understand his upcoming mythmaking in the greater context of playing with ideas in order to discover the Forms.³ Flirtatious seduction is the first step to engendering philosophical eros in Phaedrus, and myth is the vehicle for Phaedrus to move himself from the lower “rung” of speech-loving to the higher rung of knowledge of Beauty itself. When Phaedrus begins to love the discussion on speeches more than the speeches themselves, hopefully he will reflect on why this change has occurred within him, then understanding that the reason for his transformation of taste is because

¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 229a4.

² Plato *Phaedrus* 228d6–8.

³ Cf. Brisson 1998, 75–85 for another account of myth as both charming play and serious activity.

dialectics as pursuing wisdom is better (and more beautiful) than the speeches themselves. The significant and weighty redirecting of desire from speeches to Beauty itself begins in what seems like light-hearted play. Kathryn Morgan explains that Socrates' playful attitude reflects how myth points to truth as a "product of an intuition which cannot be entirely serious (because it is as yet unexamined), but which has serious implications."⁴ In the same way that myth cannot be taken seriously—or at least as seriously as the truth—Socrates will discuss at the end of *Phaedrus* how speeches, both orated and written, should not be taken seriously, except as a playful foray of the soul's pursuit of wisdom.

Written works are constructed "'for the sake of play' (276d2)" according to Morgan, "but a nobler and more serious engagement is to write in the soul of the listener (276e5)."⁵ Although the tone of *Phaedrus* begins in play, the stakes are high. As a lover of speeches, Phaedrus needs to direct his erotic attraction to the *logos* of speeches into philosophical eros for knowledge beyond discourse. In other words, as Morgan explains, "Phaedrus must learn to stop playing with dead images and become alive to the possibilities of philosophical interaction."⁶ Speeches are dead images when the reader or listener does not use the *logos* of the speech as a platform for thinking about the issue at hand. Phaedrus needs to play with the ideas conveyed by speeches. It is not the content of the myth itself that holds vital knowledge; it is only through active engagement or playfulness with the intent to truly understand reality that Phaedrus may awaken to the

⁴ Morgan 2000, 227.

⁵ Morgan 2000, 227. Also see Ferrari 1990, 67 and 212–13 as well as Griswold 1986, 218.

⁶ Morgan 2000, 228.

many avenues of *logos* toward the Forms.⁷

Phaedrus, in youthful vigor, wonders whether this stream could be a location where, according to legend, the North Wind abducted a princess. Phaedrus notes, “Could this be the very spot? The stream is lovely, pure and clear: just right for girls to be playing nearby.”⁸ It is plain to see where his mind is at—like most boys his age he is lasciviously preoccupied.⁹ His questions about the kidnapping (and presumably rape) of Oreithuia mirrors the speech Phaedrus will recite to Socrates, which also has a dark, sexual undertone as both concern an adult or authority figure (Zeus and Lysias) taking advantage of a youth (Oreithuia and Phaedrus). Phaedrus sets a flirtatious tone by mentioning the myth, which could have potentially set the scene for the traditional lover-beloved relationship. Socrates does not desire to partake of Phaedrus’s body; he is more concerned with cultivating his young mind and, more specifically, with correcting his false definition of love as expressed in Lysias’s speech.

Back at the stream, Phaedrus asks if Socrates believes the legend of the princess and North Wind. Socrates is preemptively warning the reader not to explain his subsequent account of the soul in an objective way, as many “intellectuals” of Athens are prone to do in their “clever” stories.¹⁰ Socrates believes literal interpretation of myth is a waste of time, such as when intellectuals explained the legend of the princess in objective terms: a north wind blew her in the river and she drowned. “Anyone who does not

⁷ A more contemporary example of the way Plato treats myths is the way Freud distinguishes between the literal and interpretive value of the content in dreams. Jonathon Lear provides an excellent summary of Freud’s use of dreams in the psychoanalytic setting, which parallels the way Plato uses myth. See Jonathon Lear, *Freud* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 88–115 on how interpretation of the free-association concerning the dream is more valuable than the literal content of the dream.

⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 229b.

⁹ Phaedrus in in his mid-twenties according to Nails 2002, 314.

¹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 229c.

believe in them, who wants to explain them away and make them plausible by means of some sort of rough ingenuity,” Socrates says, “will need a great deal of time.”¹¹ Why would one translate stuff of legend and myth into objective accounts when a much bigger task is at hand? Socrates says, “But I have no time for such things; and the reason, my friend, is this. I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that [...] I look not into them but into my own self.”¹² Socrates’ disdain for objective accounts explaining myths seems odd, especially since he will interweave many mythical elements into his second speech. However, he must dismiss the rival way of interpreting myth as true, i.e., rationalizing its historical background. Morgan responds to the first allusion to myth by explaining that, “Plato seeks an internal and significant truth concerning the human soul” and not historical facts.¹³ “Traditional myths,” she continues “are not good vehicles for philosophical truth, but are full of extraneous details which threaten the consistency of the philosophical message.”¹⁴ The point of Socrates’ mythmaking is not for scholars to reconstruct it into an objective account of the soul. The aim of interpreting myths philosophically is to seduce speech-lovers (or myth-lovers) into looking within. The method of playfulness lends itself to education, or as Christopher Long states, “the teaching itself must [be] expressed in a playful manner.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, the standard myths are not conducive to pursuing self-knowledge, so Socrates constructs ones that are. Socrates’ gift at mythmaking does not go unnoticed by Phaedrus, who is known for his

¹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 229e.

¹² Plato *Phaedrus* 230a.

¹³ Morgan 2000, 215.

¹⁴ Morgan 2000, 215.

¹⁵ Christopher P. Long, “Is there Method in this Madness? Context, Play and Laughter in Plato’s *Symposium* and *Republic*” in *Philosophy in Dialogue: Plato’s Many Devices*, edited by Gary Alan Scott, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 176.

love of speeches, and is more than happy to play along.

On the basis of the speeches Phaedrus gives in both *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, it is clear that he has a special attraction to speeches specifically about love. In the *Symposium*, Eryximachus relays a common complaint of dear his friend Phaedrus concerning the dearth of speeches dedicated to love:

Our poets have composed hymns in honor of just about any god you can think of; but has a single one of them given one moment's thought to the god of love (*Erōs*), ancient and powerful that he is? As for our fancy intellectuals (*sophistas*), they have written volumes praising Heracles [...] How could people pay attention to such trifles and never, not even once, write a proper hymn to Love? How could anyone ignore so great a god?¹⁶

Phaedrus loves hearing, practicing, and giving speeches, but he notices that there are not speeches on love. What he is really pointing to is the lack of depth given to the topic of love within existing speeches, but he does not know that yet. Socrates, in both *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, is responding to Phaedrus's interest in love; it is Phaedrus who is the "father of the subject" of love in both dialogues, not Socrates.¹⁷ Socrates, as midwife, helps Phaedrus "push" Phaedrus on his ideas of love. Although this is true,

¹⁶ Plato *Symposium* 177a5–177c. There is another allusion to Phaedrus's relationship to Eryximachus in *Phaedrus* 268a–c. Plato mentions Eryximachus's profession as a doctor in *Phaedrus* when Socrates constructs an illuminating example for Phaedrus. Socrates asks if a person who has knowledge of certain treatments, but is ignorant of whom to use the treatments on, could be called a doctor and train doctors. Phaedrus responds, "I think they'd say the man's mad if he thinks he's a doctor just because he read a book or happened to come across a few potions; he knows nothing of the art" (268c). The following provides more historical information about their relationship: "In Plato, Phaedrus is linked closely to Eryximachus s.v., who stands with him in the group around Hippias at Callias III's house c. 433/2, when Phaedrus would have been in his early adolescence and Eryximachus in his mid- to late teens (*Prt.* 315c), and again at Agathon's house in 416 (*Sym*; cf. *Phdr.* 268a, where Eryximachus is mentioned as Phaedrus's friend)" (Nails 2002, 232).

¹⁷ Plato *Symposium* 177d5.

Socrates indulges Phaedrus in order to fulfill Phaedrus's true need—putting love of wisdom into practice. This is highlighted when Socrates responds to Eryximachus, who has directed Phaedrus to relay the first speech at the symposium, noting that Phaedrus is already conveniently seated at the head of the table.

Socrates consents and remarks, “How could I vote ‘No,’ when the only thing I say I understand is the art of love (*ta erōtika*)?”¹⁸ This statement, playfully flirtatious, is also profoundly odd in that Socrates rarely admits to being an expert in any field. The opposite is usually true.¹⁹ However, to say that one is fundamentally a *lover* of wisdom points to the fact that Socrates does not possess wisdom. Socrates explains to Agathon that “a thing that desires, desires something of which it is in need; otherwise, if it were not in need, it would not desire it.”²⁰ This highlights the contrasting meaning of “philosopher,” as a lover of wisdom, with “sophist,” a possessor of wisdom. Socrates is in the business of becoming—not being—wise. A truly wise person knows that he does not know everything.²¹

Echoing Phaedrus's naïve question about the North Wind and the princess at the beginning of *Phaedrus*, the young Socrates in Diotima's speech in *Symposium* in his “amazement” asks, “Most wise Diotima, is this really the way it is?” And in the manner

¹⁸ Plato *Symposium* 177d7.

¹⁹ An example of Socratic ignorance, most prevalent in Plato's early dialogues, is *Meno* 71a: “You must think I am singularly fortunate, to know whether virtue can be taught or how it is acquired. The fact is that far from knowing whether it can be taught, I have no idea what virtue itself is.” All subsequent references to Plato's *Meno* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

²⁰ Plato *Symposium* 200a7–9.

²¹ Cf. Plato *Apology* 21d: “At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he (a sophist) to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know.”

of a perfect sophist she said, ‘Be sure of it, Socrates.’”²² Socrates does not want Phaedrus to merely accept that his second speech is true, rather he hopes that Phaedrus will ask as many questions as possible to inspire a dialectical exchange of ideas. Plato is slyly pointing to the aim of mythmaking in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*—it is to communicate difficult topics of discussion to philosophical novices, not to create permanent myths that are immune to scrutiny. If we take Diotima’s ladder of love at face value, we have missed the point, in the same way that if Phaedrus asks at the end of the palinode if the soul really is a chariot, and Socrates shoots back “You bet it is,” the conversation ends. Phaedrus’s speech in *Symposium* shows he understands the lover, Eros, as a paternal figure, an ancient god that brightens one’s life. The older male is the *erastēs* within the lover-beloved relationship. Phaedrus’s concept of love is limited to his experience of love within the Athenian context of the lover-beloved relationship.

In contrast to Phaedrus’s unsophisticated and endoxic notion of love, Socrates understands erotics as a philosophical practice that leads to enlightenment. C.D.C. Reeve explains that “*ta erōtika* refers to ‘the art or craft of love (*hē erōtikē technē*),” which Socrates acknowledges as a gift from the god *Erōs* in the *Phaedrus* (257a3–9).”²³ What is the connection between love and the Socratic method? Reeve notes,

the noun *erōs* (“love”) and the verb *erōtan* (“to ask questions”) seem to be etymologically connected—something explicitly mentioned in the *Cratylus* (398c5–e5). Socrates knows about the art of love in that—but just insofar as—he

²² Plato *Symposium* 208b. All subsequent references to Plato’s *Symposium* are from Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989).

²³ C.D.C. Reeve, ed., *Plato on Love: Lysis, Symposium, Phaedrus, Alcibiades with Selections from Republic and Laws* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), xix.

knows how to ask questions, how to converse elenctically.²⁴ Philosophical eros is practicing dialectics for the sake of wisdom, or, as Reeve says, “lessons in how to ask and answer questions.”²⁵ For Phaedrus the speech-lover, *elenchus* is far from his primary interest. Socrates constructs a speech that is impossible for Phaedrus to turn away from, and the same for the dialogue’s reader. “The dialogue is also play,” Morgan notes, “meant to lead to serious thought. What the myth is to the dialogue, the dialogue is to our lives.”²⁶ The myth is a platform for Phaedrus to play with ideas in the same way that the dialogue is a way for us, the readers, to play with the ideas imbedded within it. The palinode (and Socrates) is so irresistible, that afterwards Phaedrus is able to sustain a meaningful examination of speechmaking and rhetoric through Socrates’ guidance.²⁷ It is Socrates’ aim that this exercise tends to the strengthening of Phaedrus’s soul.

1.2 Philosophical Potions: Charming Charmides

Socrates uses myth in the service of producing philosophical eros. The aim of Socrates’ mythmaking in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* is similar to the purpose of the charm Socrates recites in *Charmides*. Socrates is recently returned from the army at Potidaea, and wishes to check out his old stomping grounds, one being the palaestra at Taureas. He inquires into the state of philosophy and the youth in Athens, and more specifically if any are

²⁴ Reeve 2006, xix–xx.

²⁵ Reeve 2006, xx.

²⁶ Morgan 2000, 227.

²⁷ As an undergraduate I was attracted to the myths of *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* because there was so much more room to play with the ideas than when studying other philosophers and philosophical systems for the first time. I could also relate to the topic of love more easily than epistemology or metaphysics. The dialogues served as a platform for philosophical thinking, and on that platform I stand today—after much guidance—with much more scaffolding and serious intent.

“remarkable for wisdom or beauty, or both.”²⁸ The answer is Charmides. Socrates cross-examines the handsome son of Glaucon and his older cousin Critias on the definition of *sōphrosynē*, the Greek ideal of “know thyself” paired with “nothing in excess” that means something like moderation or self-control in our parlance.²⁹ Critias, Chaerephon, and all the men and boys present gush over Charmides’s beauty. Chaerephon makes a crude comment about how his body is even more visually stimulating than his face.³⁰ Socrates responds, “Before we see his body, should we not ask him to strip and show us his soul? He is surely at the age at which he will like to talk.”³¹ The theme of the dialogue is self-control.³² Socrates’ thinly veiled rebuke of their lusting after Charmides with little to no thought about the state of his soul points to how little self-control they have.

Critias uses the excuse that Socrates knows a cure for the headaches that have lately plagued Charmides to lure him to their company.³³ Socrates, uncomfortable in his role of “physician” and stalling as usual, relays the story of a Thracian king who cautions against using any cure of the body without first curing the soul, which is the most essential part of the person. The cure is contained in a leaf, that when accompanied by a charm (φάρμακον), would render the person whole.³⁴ Socrates instructs Charmides that,

the cure of the soul, my dear youth, has to be effected by the use of certain charms, and *these charms are fair words*, and by them temperance is implanted in the soul, and where temperance comes to stay, there health is speedily imparted,

²⁸ Plato *Charmides* 153d. All subsequent references to Plato’s *Charmides* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

²⁹ Socrates says, that “‘Know thyself!’ and ‘Be temperate!’ are the same” (Plato *Charmides* 164e).

³⁰ Plato *Charmides* 154d.

³¹ Plato *Charmides* 154e.

³² For a detailed and illuminating discussion of *sophrosune* in *Charmides*, see Schultz 2013, 39–71 and Hyland 1981.

³³ Plato *Charmides* 156d3–157c6.

³⁴ Plato *Charmides* 155e.

not only in the head, but the whole body.³⁵

Socrates declares that it is necessary to heal whole and part together, so in order for Charmides to heal his body he must heal his soul; the soul is whole when *sōphrosynē* is implanted in it. Thus begins the search for *sōphrosynē*, so Socrates may teach Charmides the charm to cure his headaches.

While medicine is a physical substance that induces health, Socrates' "incantation is a verbal practice intended to act on the disposition of the soul and, in particular, to cause moderation to be born in it."³⁶ The charm Socrates uses to cure Charmides's soul is philosophical discourse. Michael Rinella explains the significance of Socrates' use of the word charm in its twofold meaning. He explains that on one hand "a *pharmakon* could be a remedy used in medicine or an ointment applied as part of bodily training," and on the other hand it could be understood as "the basis of a spell, charm, or talisman used in sorcery or divination."³⁷ Based on the second interpretation of the word *pharmakon* as spell, it could also be understood as "an analogue to the power of spoken word and its ability to place an audience under the influence of the speaker."³⁸ In the ancient world medicine and magic were "deeply interwoven."³⁹ Socrates' charm cures the soul through the power of the spoken word; a kind of discursive charm serving philosophy that is inscribed upon the soul. The answer is within the soul, known through its effects:

Then once more, Charmides, I said, fix your attention more closely and look within you. Consider the effect which temperance has upon yourself, and the

³⁵ Plato *Charmides* 157a. Italics mine.

³⁶ Luc Brisson, *Plato the Mythmaker* (trans. and ed. by Gerald Naddaf. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 80.

³⁷ Michael Rinella, *Pharmakon: Plato, Drug Culture, and Identity in Ancient Athens* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), xxii.

³⁸ Rinella 2010, xxii.

³⁹ Rinella 2010, xxii.

nature of that which should have this effect. Think over all this, and tell me truly and courageously—what is temperance?⁴⁰

The answer to the question, “What is temperance?” may be inscribed upon Charmides’s soul, but he first needs philosophical eros in order to pursue the answer to this question in an honest and rational way. Schultz confirms this reading and asks: “Will Charmides recognize that he lacks genuine *sophrosune* and join Socrates in further discussion or will he find his current mode of existence acceptable?”⁴¹ Charmides does answer that he does not know if he has self-control, which shows some progress on the youth’s part. Socrates aims to help his interlocutors reflect on what they know, and, whereby discovering that they do not know what they thought they knew, reveal the gaps in their knowledge and hopefully igniting a desire to transform their own ignorance into knowledge. Charmides has at least admitted that he does not know. The following step is to inspire the youth to passionately desire the pursuit of wisdom.

Charmides then promises to be charmed by Socrates until he reaches a state ready to receive the knowledge of self-control. Critias observes that if Charmides devotes himself to Socrates’ charms, this in itself is proof of self-control. Schultz says that

The fact that Charmides sees the charming as something Socrates will do to him rather than something that he will do for himself or, together with Socrates, illustrates Charmides’ desire to remain in his passive social role. He is unwilling to assume responsibility for cultivating his own *sophrosune*.⁴²

So Charmides does not control himself, but remains in the receiving role of beloved as he

⁴⁰ Plato *Charmides* 160d–e.

⁴¹ Schultz 2013, 56.

⁴² Schultz 2013, 56.

allows Socrates (and Critias) to care for him, instead of taking the “reins” and ruling over his soul. The youth wants Socrates to look within him and change him according to what Socrates knows is best. This is not how one becomes truly virtuous, but is a way one may cultivate the appearance of virtue.

The dialogue ends on a flirtatious note: Charmides, commanded by his guardian to follow Socrates, teases Socrates that he will do violence to uphold this command. Charmides slyly remarks, “Do not resist me then” and Socrates replies that he will certainly not. In the case of Charmides, Socrates’ discursive charms failed. The myth of the headache charm Socrates constructed falls flat, as Charmides is unwilling to think for himself; he refuses to actively engage in dialectical reasoning.⁴³ When faced with *aporia*—the state of knowing that one does not know something one previously believed one did—Charmides has the potential for intellectual liberation through philosophical eros. In other words, the path is twofold: either pursue wisdom with passionate abandon, or walk away. Charmides walks away, and later walks into the tyrannical grip of Critias.⁴⁴

As in the case of Phaedrus and Alcibiades, who claim they are devoted to love, Charmides and Critias claim they are devoted to the virtue of self-control, when in reality they are dedicated only to its appearance. Desjardins explains that the way Socrates’

⁴³ Perhaps all of Socrates’ questions have brought on another “headache.” If the behavior towards Charmides by the men of Athens in this dialogue is representative of his life, then one could speculate that Charmides is “spoiled;” he never has to actually think about anything or meet his own needs, but always has willing admirers to do his bidding. Some scholars also speculate that the morning headaches are actually hangovers from heavy drinking the night before. Cf. Hyland 1981, Schultz 2013, 52.

⁴⁴ Schultz explains the three ways that the dialogue’s conclusion foreshadows how Critias and Charmides end in tyranny: “First, Critias orders Charmides to be charmed. In doing so, Critias yields to the temptation of overt social control through the command of others. Critias’ desire to exert overt social control culminates in his involvement with the Thirty Tyrants. As leader of this regime, he rules over all other Athenian citizens. Second, Charmides willingly obeys Critias just as he will later do as one of the Ten chosen by the Thirty to govern Piraeus. Third, Socrates asks what they are plotting (176c). Charmides emphatically says, ‘Nothing.’ Then, he immediately admits that they have been plotting all along by saying, ‘Our plotting is all done’ (176c)” (Schultz 2013, 57).

interlocutors call on “traditional formulas” pushes the reader “to think about the difference between interpretations reflected in the behavior of Critias and Charmides, on the one hand (interpretations rejected as inadequate), and in that of Socrates, on the other (an interpretation Plato finds both true and worthy of enthusiastic emulation).”⁴⁵ Again, Plato’s flawed characters compel the reader to reflect on his or her own inadequacies. How do I behave? Do I emulate true virtue or the appearance of virtue? Do I pursue knowledge or the opinions that correspond to my lower desires? Asking these questions and desiring to answer them with honesty is a step necessary to transform common eros into philosophical eros—desiring to “know thyself” for the sake of an improved pursuit of wisdom. Although philosophy can be quite enchanting, especially Socrates’ speeches, it does not advocate intellectual laziness. It is not a one-stop cure all. One cannot take a sip, and with immediately alert eyes perceive the reality underlying appearances. Like love, philosophy is a process that grows with practice, time, and intellectual maturity. Indeed, philosophy is love—of wisdom.

1.3 Philosopher’s Muse: The Plane Tree, Cicadas, and the Ladder of Love

Outside the city walls, the young man and older philosopher look within themselves. Phaedrus notices how out of place Socrates looks in the natural setting, and boldly says that he will act as Socrates’ guide.⁴⁶ Socrates twice entreats Phaedrus to “lead the way” to the spot designated the best for speechmaking, although initially when he meets the youth

⁴⁵ Rosemary Desjardins, “Why Dialogues? Plato’s Serious Play” in *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 120.

⁴⁶ Plato *Phaedrus*, 230c6–d2. Phaedrus announcing that Socrates needs a guide is ironic, but also points to the reversal of the lover-beloved relationship and Socrates’ critique of its focus on physical beauty. See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion on the importance of role reversals in the way Socrates’ practices *psychagōgia*.

on the path outside the city Phaedrus asks this of Socrates.⁴⁷ It is as if Socrates is truly leading, although doing so by following Phaedrus. Phaedrus leads Socrates out of Athens, the only Socratic dialogue that occurs outside the city.⁴⁸ Socrates is shocked with his own behavior and adds that Phaedrus must “have found a potion to charm me into leaving,”⁴⁹ alluding to what seems like a magical spell that is often cast upon an impressionable mind in the midst of alluring rhetoric. It is not that Phaedrus cast Socrates under a spell, but that Socrates is casting his own type of “spell” on Phaedrus, one that ends with Phaedrus knowing why he is susceptible to charming speeches. The superficial beauty of empty words carries one away. However, those words put to good use in the service of wisdom, transform into powerful educational tools. Socrates desires Phaedrus to understand what truly attracts him—it is not just speeches, but something far greater.

Instead of the setting remaining in the background, it “will not stay where it belongs,” Ferrari observes, as it “becomes a prominent topic of discussion and a direct cause of the conversational action.”⁵⁰ By describing the natural beauty of their place of repose, it seems as if Socrates is honing his own skill at poetic oration while setting the

⁴⁷ In *Phaedrus* 227c1 Phaedrus asks Socrates to “Lead the way, then.” At 229a6 Socrates says to Phaedrus, “Lead the way, then, and find us a place to sit.” At 229b2 Socrates reiterates, “Lead on, then.” All uses of the word “lead” are derived from *próagō* [πρόαγω], which means “to lead forward, advance, induce, to escort on their way, persuade” (Liddell and Scott, 670).

⁴⁸ For the importance of setting in a philosophical context, cf. Ferrari 1990. Socrates seems to only leave Athens when deployed during his military service, and was only recorded outside the city walls of Athens during his campaign in Potidaea (c. 432–429 BCE), Delium (c. 424 BCE), and Amphipolis (c. 422 BCE) (Nails 2002, 264–265). In *Symposium*, Alcibiades mentions Socrates’s courage at Potidaea (219e; 220d–e). In *Crito*, Socrates explains what the Athenians would say if he did not follow through with his execution by drinking the poisonous hemlock concoction: “Socrates, we have strong evidence that we and the city pleased you; for you would never have stayed in it more than all other Athenians if you had not been better pleased with it than they; you never went out from the city to a festival, or anywhere else, except on military service, and you never made any other journey, as other people do, and you had no wish to know any other city or other laws, but you were contented with us and our city” (52b).

⁴⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d5.

⁵⁰ G. R. F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato’s Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3–4.

stage for his examination of eros.⁵¹ Rhetoric and philosophy are not by nature mutually exclusive; it depends on how that language is used. Take for instance Socrates' use of rhetoric in *Phaedrus*. He alludes to the lover-beloved relationship when describing the trees:

The plane tree is tall and very broad; the chaste tree, high as it is, is wonderfully shady, and since it is in full bloom, the whole place is filled with its fragrance.

From under the plane tree the loveliest spring runs with very cool water—our feet can attest to that.⁵²

Could the description of the tree mirror that of Plato himself, a handsome educator dedicated to the soul and not the body, hence chaste?⁵³ Plato is older, so he has so much to offer the youth—a beautiful environment in which to open up the soul. The shade adds a sense of protection, the fragrance hints at the richness of dialogue possible as their words waft through the air.⁵⁴ Alex Hardie explains that “plane trees are well attested for in the Athenian agora,” and there is evidence that there were two plane trees in the

⁵¹ Again, the importance of the setting is noteworthy. Did ancient Greeks consider nature beautiful? Only in the sense of how the landscape connects with the divine: “Nature itself may be described as of divine Beauty but more often ancient authors seem to connect extraordinary beauty with sacred places, with places of cult-context, thus transforming sacred land into a religious landscape, creating a sacred space which is defined by its human-made cult-context and by its natural divinity, a hyper-human, divine Beauty” (Marietta Horster, “Religious Landscape and Sacred Ground: Relationships between Space and Cult in the Greek World,” *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, (T. 227, Fasc. 4, Octobre–Décembre 2010, 435-458), 456). Because of the connection to Pan, nymphs, the river God, Boreas, etc., the setting of *Phaedrus* is considered a divine space.

⁵² Plato *Phaedrus* 230b.

⁵³ Robert Zaslavsky, “A Hitherto Unremarked Pun in the *Phaedrus*,” *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* (Vol. 15 No. 2: 1981), 115–116.

⁵⁴ Cicero plays on the etymological similarity of Plato [*Platonis*] and plane tree [*platanus*] in *De Oratore* 1.28–29: “Why should not we, Crassus, imitate Socrates in the *Phaedrus* of Plato [*Platonis*]? For this plane-tree [*platanus*] of yours has put me in mind of it, which diffuses its spreading boughs to overshadow this place, not less widely than that did whose covert Socrates sought, and which seems to me to have grown not so much from the rivulet which is described, as from the language of Plato: and what Socrates, with the hardest of feet, used to do, that is, to throw himself on the grass, while he delivered those sentiments which philosophers say were uttered divinely, may surely, with more justice, be allowed to my feet.’ Then Crassus rejoined, ‘Nay, we will yet further consult your convenience;’ and called for cushions; when they all, said Cotta, sat down on the seats that were under the plane-tree [*platano*].”

gymnasia of Athens, specifically the Academy and Lyceum.⁵⁵ Interestingly enough, “in both places, philosophical schools were organised as religious societies based in the cult of the Muses and *Mouseia*.”⁵⁶ The plane tree is also associated with Hippocrates of Kos, and the only association with the divine is that of the Muses.⁵⁷ Like a true physician, Socrates understands how the soul works and how to apply the correct rhetoric—inspired by the Muses—to allow the soul the possibility of recollection.

The mention of a potion at the beginning of *Phaedrus* is mirrored at the end of the dialogue when Socrates critiques writing through the myth of Thamus and Theuth.⁵⁸ In this myth, Theuth describes writing as a type of potion [*pharmakon*] for remembering and hence wisdom (274e5), whereas Thamus decries it as a potion for forgetfulness and the mere appearance of wisdom (275a). Here we see two opposing meanings of potion—one that promotes the soul’s health and ascent, the other promotes the soul’s harm and descent through the guise of a healing potion. The dual nature of potion mirrors the nature of rhetoric and myth—in the hands of the ignorant, it will most likely harm the soul; in the hands of the wise it can promote recollection and self-knowledge. Phaedrus’s ascent is ultimately in his hands, so Socrates’ spell can only take Phaedrus to the point of recollecting the Forms, but cannot actually remember them for him. In this case, Socrates’ *psychagōgia* is like the setting or background that aids in the pursuit of self-knowledge and the Forms. He is the soul’s doctor, correctly using the remedies available to him to

⁵⁵ Alex Hardie, “Philitas and the Plane Tree,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (Bd. 119, 1997, 21-36), 27. Cf. R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 1982), 28.

⁵⁶ Hardie 1997, 28. “The long association of plane trees and Muses suggests that the tree could be emblematic of a Mouseion not simply in Plato’s imagined scene by the Ilissus, but in the reality of cult topography. The sacred gardens sometimes incorporated in Mouseia will have provided a natural context for trees” (Hardie 1997, 30).

⁵⁷ Hardie 1997, 272–73.

⁵⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 274c5–275b.

induce the soul's recollection of the Forms.

Another interpretation of the *platon* tree, which only thrives in moist places, is that it serves as a symbol of Plato's erotic philosophy. The cool water that runs from the tree foreshadows a later reference to what happens when the "sluice-gates" of the soul are opened by love.⁵⁹ Plato's dialogue and Socrates' palinode, like the spring, bring pleasure while exciting and nourishing the mind. "Landscapes and trees," Socrates says, "have nothing to teach me; only people in the city."⁶⁰ Plato is gently reminding the reader that he is ultimately the mythmaker, the poet, the dialogue generator, and Socrates is the figure he chose as the voice of his erotic philosophy. Plato, as the writer of the dialogue, sits silently in the background—a setting that serves as a third character in the dialogue. The setting is imbued with mythological references—from the traditional Athenian myth of the North Wind to Socrates' newly minted myth of the cicadas. The myths are not the teachings themselves, but the beginning of learning towards wisdom. The third character is the learning environment conducive to self-transformation. The setting of the dialogue itself is charming, seductive, and filled with magic.

Like the Theuth and Thamus myth, the myth of the cicadas illuminates why Socrates constructs charming speeches to seduce youth like Phaedrus. Socrates relays both of these re-constructed myths to Phaedrus after the speeches have concluded. The character Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*, as well as Aristophanes as the author of

⁵⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 251e.

⁶⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d4–5.

Birds, mentions cicadas.⁶¹ The Greek word for cicada is *tettix*, which mimics the sound of the cicada song. Homer's *Illiad* describes the "lily voice of the cicada" (3.152) as compared with the voices of elders.⁶² The nymphs live underground for up to seventeen years, ascending from the ground to shed their brown exoskeleton and reveal the bright coloration and beautiful wings.⁶³ The exoskeleton remains intact and attached to the tree the insect molted from, which Aristotle observes:

The cicada the moment after issuing from the husk goes and sits upon an olive tree or a reed; after the breaking up of the husk the creature issues out, leaving a little moisture behind, and after a short interval flies up into the air and sets a chirping.⁶⁴

The chirping of the cicada often lulls one to sleep at the height of summer heat around noontime. Socrates warns Phaedrus not to be lulled into sleep as they discuss speeches under the *platon* tree because, "the cicadas, who are singing and carrying on conversations with one another in the heat of the day above our heads, are also watching us."⁶⁵ If the cicadas observe them sleeping at noon "like most people," they will assume they are "sluggish in mind" and then laugh at the pair as if they are "slaves who have

⁶¹ In his speech in *Symposium*, Aristophanes says that after Zeus splits the original humans in half, they can only reproduce like cicadas by "casting seed" in the ground and not "in one another" (191c1). The information about cicadas is incorrect, but it is noteworthy that the insect is mentioned in reference to reproduction; it serves as a symbol for reincarnation in most ancient societies.

⁶² W. B. Stanford, "The Lily Voice of the Cicadas ("Iliad" 3.152)", (Phoenix, Vol. 23 No. 1, Studies Presented to G. M. A. Grube on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday: Spring, 1969), 3–8.

⁶³ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Book 4, Part 7. Aristotle goes on to observe, "The *tettix* or cicada, alone of such creatures (and, in fact, alone of all creatures), is unprovided with a mouth, but it is provided with the tongue-like formation found in insects furnished with frontward stings; and this formation in the cicada is long, continuous, and devoid of any split."

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Book 8, Part 17, translated by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, (London: John Bell, 1907).

⁶⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 258e.

come to their resting place to sleep like sheep gathering around the spring in afternoon.”⁶⁶

However, if the cicadas observe Socrates and Phaedrus discussing the speeches,

“steadfastly navigating around them as if they were the Sirens, they will be very pleased and immediately give us the gift from the gods they are able to give to mortals.”⁶⁷

Phaedrus’ curiosity is piqued. He asks what gift would the cicadas bestow upon them from the gods. Socrates acts as though he is surprised and says, “Everyone who loves the Muses should have heard of this.”⁶⁸ He creates a myth about the humans that existed before the Muses, upon hearing the song of the Muses for the first time, continued to listen until they died of starvation. Cicadas originated from these humans, and are blessed with “no need for nourishment once they are born. Instead, they immediately burst into song, without food or drink, until it is time for them to die.”⁶⁹ When the cicadas die, they tell the Muses which people honored which Muse. For example, “To Erato, they report those who honored her by dedicating themselves to the affairs of love” and “to Calliope, the oldest among them, and Urania, the next after her, who presides over the heavens and all discourse, human and divine, and sing with sweetest voice, they report those who honor their special kind of music by leading a philosophical life.”⁷⁰ This is the gift that the cicadas can give to Phaedrus and Socrates if they choose to fight through the noontime heat and discuss the speeches. Phaedrus of course desires to be in the favor of the Muses, so exclaims, “By all means, let’s talk.” The cicadas are the messengers between humans and gods, much as Socrates characterizes eros as the *daimōn* between

⁶⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 259a1–5.

⁶⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 259a5–b1.

⁶⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 259b5.

⁶⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 259c1–5.

⁷⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 259d1–5.

ignorance and wisdom. The myth of the cicadas is another example of Socrates constructing a charming speech in order to provoke the philosophical novice to more and more sophisticated recollections of the Forms. Socrates reflects the dual nature of the cicada—his body reflects the exoskeleton of a nymph in its grubby, homely appearance. The nymph does not have wings and crawls along slowly, trapped in this grounded husk. Socrates' mind soars upwards towards the sun with strong wings and a clear voice of an adult cicada, inspiring others with his philosophical song along the way. Socrates' *daimōnic* cicada song soars into the air while the city slumbers in the noontime heat. Phaedrus is enthralled by the song enough to stay awake and participate in the spell of philosophy, dedicated to the Muses who inspire him.

Socrates invokes the Muses in the first prayer of *Phaedrus*, inaugurating his first speech. Socrates prays, “Come to me, O you clear-voiced Muses, whether you are called so because of the quality of your song or from the musical people of Liguria, ‘come, take up my burden’ in telling the tale that this fine fellow forces upon me so that his companion may now seem to him even more clever than he did before.”⁷¹ Socrates' first speech introduced the idea of madness or *mania* that is central in the palinode. It is appropriate, therefore, that the first speech began with an invocation to the divine: madness is a “gift from god.”⁷² The third type of madness discussed in the palinode is when the Muses possess a poet, which “takes the tender virgin soul and awakens it to a Bacchic frenzy of songs and poetry.”⁷³ Thinking back to Socrates' first speech, it is clear that the Muses do not promote self-control as the non-lover does. Invoking the Muses is

⁷¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 237b.

⁷² Plato *Phaedrus* 244a.

⁷³ Plato *Phaedrus* 245a.

yet another way Socrates identifies the deceptive quality of his speech. In fact, in the palinode Socrates exclaims that the potential poet who does not invoke the Muses “will fail, and his self-controlled verses will be eclipsed by the poetry of men who have been driven out of their minds.”⁷⁴ Philosophy is a *pharmakon* because it is like music. Alcibiades purports that Socrates produces enchanting “music” like Silenus through words instead of musical instruments.⁷⁵ In the cicada myth, one of the highest Muses is Urania, who “presides over the heavens and all of discourse, human and divine,” and reports to the gods “with the sweetest voice” those people who have honored her “special kind of music” by living philosophical lives.⁷⁶ Urania is also mentioned in Pausanias’s speech in *Symposium*, where he distinguished Common Aphrodite from Heavenly Aphrodite.⁷⁷ There are numerous mythological references within the description of the setting, many like these that point to the importance of philosophical eros.

G. R. F. Ferrari’s interpretation of the myth of the cicadas was originally very different from my own. The often-cited interpretation from *Listening to the Cicadas* is that the cicadas represent how the love of beautiful words is a “Siren song” that leads one astray. Phaedrus is distracted by his love of speeches, which leads one far away from philosophy. Many years later, Ferrari redacted his original position by saying, “I begin with a palinode. It is not true, that tale I told about the myth of the cicadas in Plato’s *Phaedrus*.”⁷⁸ Ferrari’s amended claim is that the divine inspiration of the cicada call inspires those who are sensitive to the beauty of language, like Phaedrus. It can “open up

⁷⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 245a5–7.

⁷⁵ Plato *Symposium* 215c–216a.

⁷⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 259d3–5.

⁷⁷ Plato *Symposium* 180d5–e1.

⁷⁸ G. R. F. Ferrari, “The Philosopher’s Antidote” in *Plato on Art and Beauty*, edited by A.E. Denham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 106.

the way to philosophy” for the intellectually stimulated, or as I argue, the novice filled with philosophical eros.⁷⁹ However, for the “intellectually lazy,” the cicada song induces sleep.⁸⁰ What happens to the soul of those who are sensitive to beautiful words in the presence of divinely inspired speeches is similar to what happens to the lover in the presence of the beautiful boy—he is driven mad with erotic longing. Ferrari notes that “a divine madness can awaken us to the true Beauty we have lost” but it is imperative that reason remain in charge of the soul, otherwise the power of the dark horse will overtake the soul as it charges forth toward the erotic object.⁸¹ Ferrari likens this process to Odysseus’s encounter with the Sirens. Instead of plugging his ears like the rest of his crew, he tied himself to the mast. Reason remains in charge, even when the dark horse wants nothing more than to pursue the Siren song. The soul is driven mad with earthly beauty, and because reason is in charge we can use that madness to cultivate philosophical eros in pursuit of Beauty itself. In the presence of beautiful speeches, we must “remain lashed to the mast” of reason and not get carried away by Plato’s charming myths.⁸² The danger of the Siren song is that the soul not ruled by reason will actually believe the myths; he will not let the beauty of the speeches work on cultivating philosophical eros directed at Beauty itself, rather than at the images of beauty that are encountered in the sensible realm.⁸³ Attraction to beautiful speeches is not an affliction, it is the starting point for properly directed eros ruled by reason.

⁷⁹ Ferrari 2012, 106.

⁸⁰ Ferrari 2012, 106.

⁸¹ Ferrari 2012, 106.

⁸² Ferrari 2012, 106.

⁸³ I learned that in New Age circles there is an idea that each person is born with a “twin flame.” When Plato was cited as the source, I discovered that it was a re-telling of Aristophanes’ speech on Plato’s *Symposium*. There are those who cannot understand the pedagogical use of charming speeches and myths, and perhaps those are the ones like Odysseus’s crew who should plug their ears!

Along with the cicadas, nymphs, and the river god Achelous, Pan has a place by the Ilissos as well.⁸⁴ The mythological goat-god is strongly identified with the landscape, but a setting that is more meaningful than “spatial location.”⁸⁵ The importance of setting for Pan is mirrored in Phaedrus, a dialogue that significantly takes place outside Athens. In the same way that for Pan, landscape is not meant to be “picturesque” but a sign of the “supernatural,” the dialogue’s setting readies the audience for something verging on the supernatural to occur. Pan’s landscape is “a space where strange phenomena take place,” which has a connection to the divine madness or “delirium” that Socrates will experience as he gives his speeches.⁸⁶ Borgeaud continues that the dialogue unfolds in the banks of Ilissos” and that Socrates, Phaedrus, and the reader are “at the very gates of Athens, but the landscape, characterized by water and shade, is sacred to Pan and the nymphs, and it is the hour of Pan (noon).”⁸⁷ Something strange is about to happen. The dialogue’s setting sets aside the content as a little different than what one normally expects in a Platonic dialogue, which takes place in the city.⁸⁸ Part of the strangeness is the focus on what happens to *incite* philosophical reasoning in a novice, which occurs through carefully executed *logos*. Socrates courts Phaedrus to the side of philosophy through playing with *logos*.

In *Symposium*, Diotima acts as the mouthpiece of Socrates, and compares philosophical discourse to a magical enchantment. She describes Eros, the son of Penia and Poros, as the quintessential philosopher who is “resourceful in his pursuit of

⁸⁴ Chapter 4 of this dissertation elaborates on the importance of Pan in Plato’s erotic philosophy.

⁸⁵ Philippe Borgeaud, *The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece*, trans. by Kathleen Atlass and James Redfield (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 59.

⁸⁶ Borgeaud 1988, 59.

⁸⁷ Borgeaud 1988, 59.

⁸⁸ Pan does not like the city, and even shows a “violent antipathy for civic space” (Borgeaud 1988, 59).

intelligence, a lover of wisdom through all his life; a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings.”⁸⁹ A philosopher is the master of resource, and will use whatever he has at his disposal to brew the most magnificent potions. Ostensibly, these potions aim to cure the soul of ignorance, as is the case for Socrates’ charm in *Charmides*. Socrates’ use of charming speeches in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* resourcefully use myth to promote ascent of the soul. In other words, Socrates conjures up a potion inducing self-knowledge out of his own love for wisdom.⁹⁰

In one colorful example, Plato silences the music for a different, “special kind of music” to please the Muses.⁹¹ The setting of *Symposium* is a festive drinking party for the intellectuals, artists, and leaders of Athens. On this evening the partygoers decide to put down the wine and give the flute girls the night off in order to give speeches in praise of Love, or *Eros*. One by one they give their speeches, and each praises the qualities of love that attract them personally. Socrates hears several speeches by individuals who are attracted to very different things and each one creates a speech that validates his own life. So is beauty in the eye of the beholder? With so many types of beauty that attract different people in different ways, how could there possibly be one universal beauty or one correct way to love? Agathon’s poetic but rather vague speech initiates a fascinating discussion between him and Socrates. This is where Socrates, an expert on the “art of

⁸⁹ Plato *Symposium* 203d5.

⁹⁰ Griswold’s *Self-Knowledge in Plato’s Phaedrus* focuses on the dialogue as a whole as promoting self-examination for both the character Phaedrus, and more importantly the reader. I believe Griswold’s thesis is a true interpretation of Plato; however, my project differs in focus. I am examining how Socrates incorporates philosophical erotics within his critique of sophistry in order to promote self-knowledge through charming speeches that reinvent mythological tales. To clarify, I use the term “ascent” when referring to the process of recollection that leads to self-knowledge because this term is in line with both Socrates’ myth of the charioteer soul and the ladder of love. I am working within Socrates’ myths to uncover their implicit critique of sophistry in the way they direct eros towards its true object: Beauty itself.

⁹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 259d5.

love,” comes in. Socrates engages Agathon in a dialogue concerning Agathon’s claim that love possesses beauty. According to Socrates, Agathon’s characterization of eros as beautiful does not correspond with the essential lack or yearning that defines eros. Socrates gives his speech through a “remembered” dialogue between a younger version of himself and the priestess Diotima, the only female voice at the all-male symposium. It is this speech that serves as the climax of the symposium.

In *Symposium*, Socrates says that he only knows the “art of love” in lieu of, ostensibly, the art of rhetoric. And yet Socrates’ speech, through the mouthpiece of the prophetess Diotima, expresses delightful discursive charms. The ladder of love is a compelling and memorable tale of erotic ascent from the body to the soul and ultimately to Beauty itself. In the *Symposium*, the reader finds a twist to the *Republic*’s allegory of the cave. Where the cave analogy uses vision and light to characterize how we learn, the ladder of love plays on our notions of attraction and beauty—also visual—to examine why we *desire* to learn. What does love have to do with philosophy? According to Plato—everything! Philosophy is the love of wisdom. Socrates expresses a love for wisdom that transforms *philia*—love as fondness and appreciation for friends, family, and community—into *eros*. The common understanding of erotic love is the passionate, burning yearning to possess the object of desire. Socrates says that *eros* is the intense desire for something one lacks. The greatest lack in life is wisdom, and the greatest fulfillment in life is bridging the gap between ignorance and wisdom. For Socrates, the ultimate object of desire is the Forms—providing access to true knowledge and wisdom. Philosophical *eros* means that one loves something enough to think deeply about it, especially in dialectical exchange with other passionate lovers of wisdom.

Socrates portrays himself as the *daimōn* between humans and gods, and opinion and knowledge. He also uses Diotima as a mouthpiece for his speech. Diotima's speech begins with a portrait of eros as the progeny of *Poros* (resource) and *Penia* (lack), which is always pursuing what it knows it lacks—immortality. After discussing the nature and aim of love, Diotima initiates the young Socrates into the art of loving young boys correctly. The message of the ladder of love serves to inspire the youth to advance from ignorance towards wisdom starting with one thing that most people experience—sexual desire. The art of correctly loving starts on the first rung of the ladder: attraction to one beautiful body. Think of this step as a first crush and imagine all the feelings associated with the experience. How does one move to the next rung of loving *all* beautiful bodies? Diotima explains, “he should realize that the beauty of any one body is brother to the beauty of any other and that if he is to pursue beauty of form he would be very foolish not to think that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same.” From loving all beautiful bodies, then we move to loving beautiful souls, and on to beautiful laws and customs and all types of knowledge. Beauty is ultimately the same in each, and each new type of beauty teaches us to understand beauty in a better way. The beauty of an individual reflects a type of goodness, whether a healthy physique or a good character, but Diotima thinks beautiful ideas will thrill the soul even more. Ascent up the ladder of love entails moving away from particular bodies (shadows) and towards the universal idea of Beauty (the Sun) that is the true source of our attraction. Once *eros* has awoken, the soul can begin the gradual work of recognizing its true source of attraction: to Beauty itself.

The erotic attraction towards the Form of Beauty rests latently in the soul, ready to be woken up and recollected by a bit of prodding, poking, or stinging by Athens's

infamous gadfly. Knowing the self prompts us to open our droopy eyes and notice the higher rungs above, and then hopefully to desire to climb to the very top of the ladder. This awakening of the hazy mind by attraction to beauty is the gradual process of recollection. Eros motivates the soul to reach toward the heights of human existence. Instead of remaining satisfied with the body, the love of Beauty inspires us to care for the soul. The lower rungs represent lower desires such as beautiful bodies, money, and fame, while the higher ones represent higher desires like loving Beauty itself and fervently pursuing wisdom. Phaedrus, as a lover of speeches, is situated on the third rung of the ladder as he is attracted to the beauty within *logos* as expressed in the Athenian tradition of speechmaking. The constant chirping of the cicadas in Phaedrus could represent the buzz of speeches in Athens. Will Phaedrus be lulled to sleep by Athens's speeches, remaining on the middle rung of the ladder of love? Or will his love of *logos* be transformed into a love for knowledge (about rhetoric and writing), propelling him to the next rung and closer to the source of his attraction, Beauty itself?

When the individual recognizes that the object of eros is not just bodily flux, then it becomes clear that ascending is possible through uncovering that object we should be pursuing with all of our passion. Diotima reminds Socrates that, "reproduction always leaves behind a new one in place of the old."⁹² Reproduction is the synthesis of new ideas in the dialectic. Sheffield explains,

The answer to why we desire to be creative in the presence of beauty is that this activity allows us to be productive of a perceived good, and, given that we are the

⁹² Plato *Symposium* 207d.

kind of living beings that we are, *production is the mortal form of possession*.⁹³ Humans are by nature always in a state of flux, and reproduction is the only way to immortality, to what is beyond the constraints of the body. However, even our souls are in a state of flux caused by the process of forgetting and remembering:

For what we call studying exists because knowledge is leaving us, because forgetting is the departure of knowledge, while studying puts back a fresh memory in place of what went away, thereby preserving a piece of knowledge, so that it seems to be the same. And in this way everything mortal is preserved, not, like the divine, by always being the same in every way, but because what is departing and aging leaves behind something new, something such as it had been.⁹⁴

The dialectic process turns an old idea into a new idea, which in turn becomes “old” and flawed and resurfaces through Socratic cross-examination as a new idea, etc. This uncovering is the process of learning; it is being able to perceive the few and the rare that wash ashore from the many. Sheffield states, “The *Symposium* is itself presented as an act of *erōs*.”⁹⁵ Philosophical eros gives rise to and sustains the ascent of the soul. Philosophical eros is the soul’s attraction to true knowledge that requires dialectical ascent. Ascent is the activity of dialectic reasoning proceeding correctly; the soul flourishes when dialectical reasoning is paired with eros.

Unlike a traditional potion, the philosophical brew cannot guarantee transformation. Philosophical eros opens up the possibility for the individual to ascend

⁹³ Frisbee C.C. Sheffield, *Plato’s Symposium: The Ethics of Desire* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2009), 110.

⁹⁴ Plato *Symposium* 207d–208a.

⁹⁵ Sheffield 2009, 8.

through rich dialogue and careful thinking. The potion makes the soul receptive to dialogue; the individual as a self-mover decides to go within or remain on the level of opinion. In the words of Socrates in *Theaetetus*, where he feels like he is being used like a bag of tricks, he exclaims:

You have an absolute passion for discussion, Theodorus. I like the way you take me for a sort of bag full of arguments, and imagine I can easily pull out a proof to show that our conclusion is wrong. You don't see what is happening. The arguments never come out of me; they always come from the person I am talking with. I am only at a slight advantage in having the skill to get some account of the matter from another's wisdom and entertain it with fair treatment. So now, I shall not give any explanation myself, but try to get it out of our friend.⁹⁶

Socrates' exclamation that Phaedrus is an extraordinary lover of speeches parallels his claim that Theodoros is passionate about arguments. In both cases, the young men are asking Socrates to entertain them with *logos*, as if he were a paid magician pulling truth from a hat. The difference between Socrates likened to a midwife aiding in the birth of dialectical reasoning and Phaedrus as inducer of speeches, is that Phaedrus does not seem to care about the truthfulness of the words produced—as a typical sophist—just that the language sates his love of rhetoric.

Like the cicadas buried underground for years, Socrates practices *psychagōgia* by calling dead images out of the grave so they may crawl out and leave behind rough exoskeletons. According to the myth of reincarnation in the palinode, the soul falls from the heavenly procession when it forgets the Forms, and becomes trapped in a body. The

⁹⁶ Plato *Theaetetus* 161a–b. All subsequent references to Plato's *Theaetetus* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

cicadas begin to transform as newly formed wings unfold, strengthen, and lead the cicada on an ascent to the branches of the *platon* tree. The gradual transformation from a lower reality to a higher one parallels the ladder of love in *Symposium* and the charioteer analogy in *Phaedrus*. The cicada transformed from underground nymph in its lower stage, to a flying singing cicada in its higher stage. The ascent was made possible by being placed in the correct setting, a beautiful environment conducive to ascent. Listening to conversations strengthens their wings so they may fly above and hear the song of Urania, the heavenly realm. Similarly, participating in dialectics strengthens intellectual vision via recollection. The constant hum of cicadas reminds one that philosophical speeches imbued with myth contain a powerful *pharmakon* that aids the soul's ascent up the ladder of love toward Beauty itself. As Socrates and Phaedrus rest under Plato, the cry of cicadas fills the warm summer breeze as it lightly brushes over their skin; a beautiful environment to discuss how eros opens the soul.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 230c.

CHAPTER 2

PSYCHAGŌGIA AS PHARMAKON:

THE HEALING POWER OF GUIDED RECOLLECTION

Socrates says, “Well, isn’t the method of medicine
in a way the same as
the method of rhetoric?”

— Plato *Phaedrus* 270b1–2

In this chapter I will show that a vital part of Plato's philosophical eros is the use of charming speeches as *psychagōgic pharmakon*, especially as a response to sophistry. A sophist persuades the crowd with charming speeches that do not necessarily provide truth, only the image of truth. The sophist utilizes rhetoric to persuade, while not actually pursuing what is good, noble, or true. The philosopher uses informed dialectic to pursue precisely those things for which rhetoric can only provide appearances.¹ In *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains that rhetoric is the art of soul-leading through words.² By defining rhetoric as "directing the soul by means of speech" Socrates is holding a mirror to Phaedrus in order to prompt this speech-lover to look within and reflect on the consequences of his soul being led by unrestrained *logos*.³ Socrates is trying to make Phaedrus ask meaningful self-referential questions: Phaedrus loves speeches, but to what end? Where does rhetoric lead his soul? Examining rhetoric after the speechmaking helps Phaedrus examine for himself why he loves speeches and how the object of his love trains his soul to reach its aim.⁴ The move from loving speeches to loving self-knowledge via discussion of speeches is Socrates' pedagogical strategy to gradually lead Phaedrus out of the lower rungs of reality and toward the highest rung of Beauty itself.

¹ "Now, do you mean, to make him carry conviction to the crowd on all subjects, not by teaching them, but by persuading? [...] And "to the crowd" means "to the ignorant?" [...] So he who does not know will be more convincing to those who do not know than he who knows, supposing the orator to be more convincing than the doctor [...] Then the case is the same in all the other arts for the orator and his rhetoric: there is no need to know the truth of the actual matters, but one merely needs to have discovered some device of persuasion which will make one appear to those who do not know to know better than those who know" (Plato *Gorgias* 458b–459c).

² Plato *Phaedrus* 261a7–8. "τέχνη ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων."

³ *Psychagōgia* is used in *Phaedrus* at 261a8 and 271c10.

⁴ Griswold 1986, 29. Griswold argues that Socrates promotes self-knowledge in *Phaedrus* by Socrates' speeches holding a mirror up to Phaedrus's soul. Griswold says, "This drama functions as a mirror in which Phaedrus is made to detach himself from himself and so observe himself. He can become self-conscious only when his love of speech becomes reflective, that is, itself an object of speech. Socrates enters a comedy of imitation and deception with Phaedrus in order to lead Phaedrus to self-knowledge."

In *Phaedrus*, *psychagōgia* (ψυχᾶγωγία) translates as “soul-leading” or “the winning of men’s souls, persuasion.”⁵ Historically, *psychagōgia* refers to an “evocation of souls from the nether world,” usually within the context of a ritual.⁶ In the sense of the rhetorician, spoken words raise the “dead” or attract an otherwise uninterested person, and the conjurer transforms the souls as he wishes with his magical power.⁷ Elizabeth Asmis traces the use of *psychagōgia* in Aristophanes’ *Birds* when,

the chorus of birds sees a strange sight: Socrates “is conjuring souls” (*psychagōgei*, 1555) by a lake among the ‘Shadow-feet.’ [...] In casting Socrates as a conjurer of souls, Aristophanes is parodying Socrates’ well-known ethical concern, his care for the soul.⁸

Aristophanes’ parody of Socrates is correct in that it applies to Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus*, where Socrates constructs speeches with rhetorically powerful myths that appeal to the youth, viz., Phaedrus. Unlike this selection from *Birds*, he does not need to shed any blood in a Homeric fashion to attract a soul; he simply constructs magical myths.

As I will explore in this chapter, Socrates gradually leads this youthful soul to appreciate truer speeches than the inferior sophistic speech of Lysias. Plato uses *psychagōgia* to refer to sophistic rhetoric in his description of Protagoras, who “draws them from each of the cities through which he passes, enchanting them with his voice just

⁵ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott. *A Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 903.

⁶ Liddell and Scott 1889, 903.

⁷ Elizabeth Asmis, “*Psychagogia* in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Illinois Classical Studies* (Vol. 11 No. 1 (1986): 153–172), 156. *Birds* was produced in 414 B.C.E. According to Debra Nails, the dramatic date for *Phaedrus* is sometime between 418–416 B.C.E., while the events in *Symposium* are in 416 (314). She also explains that the mutilation of the Herms and desecration of the Eleusinian mysteries took place in 415 (Nails 2002, 17–8).

⁸ Asmis 1986, 156.

like Orpheus, and they follow after his voice spellbound.”⁹ Jessica Moss notes that *Phaedrus* is the only dialogue that uses the word *psychagōgia* as a noun, using it otherwise only twice outside this dialogue.¹⁰ Asmis explains that, “in the *Laws* (909b), he plays on the basic sense of ‘conjuring’ souls of the dead to add to it the notion of ‘beguiling’ the living; and in the *Timaeus* (71a) he uses the verb to refer to the beguilement of the desiring part of the soul by means of images.”¹¹ Because Plato uses the same word to describe the sophists’ use of rhetoric, we understand that Plato has Socrates deliberately using rhetoric to lead *Phaedrus*’s soul in the sense of the verb, and rhetoric as the noun form of the verb.¹² The way Socrates uses rhetorically charged myths is not limited to *Phaedrus*, which also provides a critique of rhetoric. Socrates often explains ideas using myths, and in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, those myths are unique because they are explicitly erotically charged.¹³

Isocrates also uses the word “to describe the effect of poetic devices on the listener.”¹⁴ For example, in *Evagoras* (10) Isocrates explains that although the speech may be inferior, if it sounds good it will garner the audience’s approval. The strategy is to “‘charm’ their listeners with beautiful rhythms and harmonies even though their diction

⁹ Plato *Protagoras* 315a.

¹⁰ Jessica Moss, “Soul-Leading: The Unity of *Phaedrus*, Again,” (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. XLIII (2012): 1–23), 20.

¹¹ Asmis 1986, 156.

¹² In the discussion after the speeches, Socrates will illuminate how dialectical reasoning in the form of philosophy is also a way to “lead souls.”

¹³ Socrates does not always participate in *psychagōgia* by becoming mythmaker. For example, in *Lysis* he explains, “those who are already wise no longer love wisdom, whether they are gods or men. Neither do those who are so ignorant that they are bad, for no bad and stupid person loves wisdom. There remains only those who have this bad thing, ignorance, but have not yet been made ignorant and stupid by it. They are conscious of not knowing what they don’t know” (Plato *Lysis* 218a2–b1). Here Socrates is leading Lysis to the same goal: to think for himself and in doing so inflame his philosophical eros.

¹⁴ Asmis 1986, 156. Keep in mind that Isocrates is Plato’s rival. Isocrates argues that his own work is philosophy while Plato’s work is sophistry, although he defines philosophy as “the ability to speak well which in turn reflects and is the product of the ability to think well and shrewdly about practical matters” (Nehamas 1990, 4).

and thoughts may be poor.”¹⁵ Similarly, in *To Nicocles* (49) Isocrates says the “rhetoricians who wish to ‘allure’ their listeners must use the crowd-pleasing device of myth, just like the poets.”¹⁶ Mythmaking is another tool for the rhetorician to persuade his audience. For the sophistic rhetorician, it does not matter whether or not the words point to Forms, so long as they persuade the soul. The *pharmakon* of the sophist’s *psychagogic* potion is a distraction at best, and at worst poisonous for the soul. It may lead to what Alcibiades describes as Socrates putting him in a trance where he loses any ability for free choice. Whereas Socrates is concerned with caring for the souls of his “victims,” the sophists are usually concerned about their own material gain.¹⁷

For Socrates, speeches lead the soul to philosophical discussions that enable it to heal by recollection of the divine Forms. One could call these “philosophical speeches” because they aid the soul’s ascent in the same way a *pharmakon* aids physical healing. *Pharmakon*, as we saw in the preceding chapter, is understood as both a doctor’s healing salve and a magician’s potion that, depending on the expertise and intent of the practitioner, can harm or heal. If rhetoric is administered properly, it becomes a powerful tool to construct speeches and myths that appeal to the interests (superficially) and needs (primarily) of the audience; reaching Beauty itself in the ascent via dialectic is the ultimate goal. At worst, speeches lead the soul to lower goods and vice. Plato offers many examples of the poisonous power of rhetoric in his dialogues, often using an analogy to

¹⁵ Asmis 1986, 156.

¹⁶ Asmis 1986, 156.

¹⁷ Plato *Symposium* 217a1: “I no longer had a choice—I just had to do whatever he told me.”

medicine.¹⁸ For example, Asmis observes that the power *logos* has on the soul is similar to the power *pharmaka* have on the body. This explains why “Gorgias held that a speaker can shape a soul in whatever way he wishes and in particular ‘drug’ and ‘bewitch’ a soul ‘by an evil persuasion.’”¹⁹ In *Phaedrus*, Socrates likens rhetoric to medicine because they both use particular methods to care for their respective subjects—medicine heals the body and rhetoric the soul.²⁰

The *pharmakon* of philosophical speeches is that it leads the soul to see the higher reality “above” appearances; it is as if the potion lifts a blindfold from the eyes so they can see the “higher rungs” of the ladder of love that were once concealed. Diotima’s ladder of love confirms this reading of *pharmakon* in that she says the mysteries are not for the uninitiated.²¹ Not everyone will choose to climb the ladder of love. Like the ladder of love, leading the soul of Phaedrus involves erotic intrigue, the context of the lover-beloved relationship, a gradual redirection of the object of eros that takes place through dialectical attainment of knowledge, and the ultimate goal of knowledge of divine Forms. The steps find a parallel in Diotima’s genealogy of the *daimōn* Eros in her speech in *Symposium*. Love, as the son of *Poros* (resource) and *Penia* (lack), is described as inheriting the following qualities from his father:

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

¹⁸ Socrates contrasts rhetoric and philosophy by way of an analogy between cookery and medicine in *Gorgias* (500b–d). Cf. Susan B. Levin, *Plato’s Rivalry with Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 41–72 for a rigorous treatment on medicine in Plato’s *Gorgias*.

¹⁹ Asmis 1986, 156.

²⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 270b1.

²¹ Plato *Symposium* 210a1.

intelligence, a lover of wisdom (*philosophōn*) through all his life; a genius with enchantments, potions (*pharmakeus*), and clever pleadings (*sophistēs*).²²

Eros inherits his great “Need” from his mother *Penia*, and that he is “always poor...tough and shriveled and shoeless and homeless.”²³ Eros sounds like Socrates, which highlights his erotic pursuit of wisdom. He loves and needs wisdom because he does not possess it. Resource represents the innate knowledge in the soul that is recollected in the proper environment.

Phaedrus or any philosophical novice represents the resource with which Socrates as “lack” comes in contact, creating beautiful speeches that “hunt” after wisdom. Socrates has practice in this hunt as the *daimōn* of philosophy, so he has more philosophical resources than many, but his erotic attraction to Beauty itself is strong—even more so because he has recollected Beauty itself as the source of his attraction to beautiful bodies. Socrates’ intellectual vision is much clearer than Phaedrus’s, but that does not inhibit Socrates from continuing to practice his erotic art with this or any interested novice.

Alternatively, resource and lack give birth to philosophical eros that fuels the dialectic in constant and relentless pursuit of Beauty itself. In this sense, the parents of love can also represent the two interlocutors involved in dialectic. Phaedrus is resource because Socrates is playing off of the available eros—in this case a love of speeches—to induce the birth of philosophical eros leading to Beauty itself. Seeing Phaedrus’s passionate love of speeches fuels Socrates’ philosophical eros as well. Seeing this young man in love with logos inspires Socrates to meet him at his “rung” on the ladder of love in order to give birth to a speech so beautiful that it will pique Phaedrus’ interest in what

²² Plato *Symposium* 203d

²³ Plato *Symposium* 203c5–d.

is beyond speeches. In this sense, Phaedrus inspires Socrates and provides the resource needed to deliver *logos* inspired by love and inspiring love. You see, Diotima so filled the young Socrates with philosophical eros that he continues to praise love and practice its arts whenever possible. After Socrates' speech, he says,

This, Phaedrus, and the rest of you, was what Diotima told me. I was persuaded. That's why I say that every man must honor Love, why I honor the rites of Love myself and practice them with special diligence, and why I commend them to others. Now and always I praise the power and courage of Love so far as I am able. Consider this speech, then, Phaedrus, if you wish a speech in praise of Love. Or if not, call it whatever and however you please to call it.²⁴

Socrates directly addresses Phaedrus the speech-lover after his encomium on eros. Socrates explains that the goal of his speeches as *psychagōgic pharmakon*: to persuade others to ascend the ladder of love. When Socrates says, "once persuaded, I try to persuade others" he is saying that pursuing Beauty itself is an act of love because "human nature can find no better workmate for acquiring this [philosophical] eros."²⁵ The role of philosopher is to guide the soul in the right direction by practicing the "art of love."²⁶ Philosophy is the art of passionately panting after Beauty itself, committing wholeheartedly to attaining knowledge of the Forms. If you pursue wisdom with others, you are less likely to be seen as a madman because others will recognize your madness as divine. Unfortunately for Socrates, during his trial the philosophical eros he inspired in the youth was deemed more detrimental to the their souls than the physical eros of the

²⁴ Plato *Symposium* 212b1–c1.

²⁵ Plato *Symposium* 212b1–c1.

²⁶ Plato *Symposium* 177d8–9.

sophists. Athens found practicing the art of bodily-sophistic love more acceptable than intellectual-philosophic love, and prosecuted Socrates accordingly.

2.1 Sophistry as Poison not Potion: Phaedrus's Speech and Socratic *Mimesis*

The dialogue *Phaedrus* has three main parts: the opening scene, the three speeches, and the philosophical discussion about speeches. In the third part, Socrates shifts from giving speeches on eros to an analysis of speeches and rhetoric in general, and again shifts his focus from speeches to writing.²⁷ When Socrates criticizes writing he is referring back to the “scroll” hidden under Phaedrus’s cloak at the beginning of the dialogue.²⁸ Discussing an idea honestly and carefully is far superior to memorizing a speech, whether written or recited orally. Socrates is gently reminding Phaedrus that his love of speeches will only get him so far, while understanding speeches and discussing the merit of each is truly valuable.

The discursive layers in Plato’s *Phaedrus* begin with an explanation of the setting, Phaedrus’s recitation of Lysias’s speech, Socrates’ first imitative and false speech, Socrates’ second mythological speech, and the subsequent meta-discussion about the previous speeches. Socrates’ first speech reveals the use of language for persuasion and mimicry, with little else but a flimsy argument to draw us in. Socrates’ second speech uses rhetoric in the poetic description of the soul as a winged creature. He creatively employs language to crack open the oyster of the realm of appearances to reveal the pearl of truth within. Language can be misused and abused, but that should not turn us off from its charming possibilities. What better place to test the limits of language with speeches

²⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 274b–c.

²⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 228d.

than among the speechless trees? In fact, this was Phaedrus's reason for going outside the city walls in the first place. If Socrates had not passed by, then Phaedrus would have practiced reciting his speech like "the self-forgetful chatter of a sleepwalker."²⁹ Griswold claims that "Lysias' speech is 'not healthy' (242e5) for Phaedrus," rather more akin to "a *pharmakon* in the sense of 'poison,' not 'remedy.'"³⁰ Not all speeches lead to the health of the soul.

Socrates remarks that Phaedrus must have put a spell on him to get him to venture into the country, where the "landscape and trees have nothing to teach."³¹ As someone "dedicated to learning" Socrates recognizes that only people can help him learn, not the voiceless trees, although Socrates teases Phaedrus that he would follow him anywhere with the prospect of hearing the likes of his speech.³² Socrates is like an animal following a treat; in this case the treat is "the leaves of a book containing a speech."³³ Socrates is mirroring Phaedrus's lust for speeches. Phaedrus repeats the speech of his sophist mentor, Lysias, who, as Gellrich notes, provides a "novel, paradoxical thesis that one ought to choose the non-lover over the lover"³⁴ because "it is better to give your favors to someone who does not love you than someone who does."³⁵ Lysias's justification is that a lover is controlled by eros not reason, so he cannot pursue what is best for his beloved. The conventional understanding of erotic love is employed in Lysias's speech. Martha Nussbaum explains that the common notion of eros was a subjective "unreasoning 'mad' passion, strongly sexual in nature, which takes the person over, acquires the force of

²⁹ Griswold 1986, 24.

³⁰ Griswold 1986, 24.

³¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d5.

³² Plato *Phaedrus* 230d.

³³ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d–e1.

³⁴ Gellrich 1994, 288.

³⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 237b5.

necessity (231a, 233c), and deprives the person of self-control and deliberation.”³⁶ The speech provides many reasons why a non-lover is superior to a lover, but they all revolve around the idea of a lover as “sick” and a non-lover as “sound” in the mind.³⁷

In *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Socrates provides a philosophy of eros—one that hopes to inspire divine madness as a way to recollecting the Forms. The distinction between a lover and a non-lover is crucial. If Lysias is correct and a non-lover is more beneficial for the youth’s pursuit of virtue and wisdom, then the idea of philosophy as passionately yearning for the Forms is diminished. Lysias provides reasons why a non-lover is more beneficial to a youth in pursuit of the best life. For example, a non-lover provides voluntary and consistent favors to the beloved because his “desire never dies down” like it does for the lover.³⁸ A non-lover feels responsible for his actions and does not keep a record of all the favors he bestowed and what he received in return for those favors, as a lover does. The non-lover will always bestow favors to new and old beloveds alike. There is a larger pool of friends to choose from if you do not discriminate between lovers and non-lovers. The beloved’s reputation will not be stained when he spends time with a non-lover, because everyone understands the intention of the friendship to be pure. Another reason a non-lover is more advantageous for the beloved is that there is no messy break-up involving jealousy or other pettiness to worry about.³⁹ Lysias concludes with an entreaty for the beloved, Phaedrus, to accept him as his non-lover.⁴⁰ Not anyone

³⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *The Sleep of Reason: Erotic Experience and Sexual Ethics in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 67.

³⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 231d.

³⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 231a1.

³⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 232c.

⁴⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 233a5. Although Lysias would occupy the traditional role of “lover” he would do so ostensibly from the position of someone who is not in love.

will help Phaedrus to “become a better person.”⁴¹ Lysias promises a lasting friendship along with his time, patience, forgiveness, and effort to lead his soul to virtue.⁴²

Examining why Phaedrus’s ascent is inhibited by this unconventional speech that switches the lover’s role into the role of a non-lover, Gellrich explains that it “has taken the conventional social expectation of rational control in male sexual activity and played it out along the lines of a self-serving hedonism aimed at decorous self-gratification without concern for the good.”⁴³ The sophistic speechmaker had charmed Phaedrus with a speech that ultimately aims to promote the goals of the speechmaker and not the audience.

The explanation of the cultural nuances embedded within the lover-beloved relationship “persuasively drive[s] a wedge between love’s madness and its alleged educational benefits.”⁴⁴ The danger of Lysias’s speech is how it positions Phaedrus in the passive role of beloved or “non-loved.” Instead of Phaedrus portrayed as an equal to Lysias, having as much rational capacity for thought, there is instead “a form of charismatic bondage at the rhetorical level, with Phaedrus in the feminized, ravished position of receiving without resistance.”⁴⁵ Socrates needs to help turn Phaedrus into a ravisher of ideas. This can only be accomplished if Phaedrus surpasses his role as a passive listener to speeches and becomes someone who thinks about speeches actively and constructs new ones that help resolve puzzles for others.

The role reversals also hold up a mirror to Phaedrus so that he may see himself

⁴¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 233a.

⁴² Plato *Phaedrus* 233b5–c.

⁴³ Gellrich 1994, 288.

⁴⁴ Nussbaum 2002, 68.

⁴⁵ Gellrich 1994, 289.

objectively as cast under Lysias's spell.⁴⁶ Socrates' hope is that Phaedrus will reflect on his eros with his newfound self-awareness in order to understand why he was lured by rhetorical enchantments, and why philosophical discussions are ultimately more alluring. "Socrates' attempts to seduce Phaedrus away from his infatuation with Lysianic rhetoric and towards devotion to philosophy," Moss explains, and by doing so "we see Socrates engaged in an attempt at soul-leading, using as his tool Phaedrus's love, not of another person, but of rhetoric."⁴⁷ This explains why Phaedrus has so much potential: he already loves *logos*, but he loves an image of the truth which *logos* signifies instead of the truth itself. Socrates is aware of what leads Phaedrus's soul, thereby playing on that love by constructing a speech that Phaedrus cannot easily forget.

At the close of the recitation, Socrates, as tongue in cheek as he gets and reflecting Phaedrus's enthusiasm for the speech, exclaims, "It's a miracle, my friend; I'm in ecstasy."⁴⁸ Even the young Phaedrus picks up on the sarcasm. Nevertheless, he enjoins Socrates to praise the speech on its "impressive" and "complete" examination of the nature of love.⁴⁹ Socrates refuses these terms, so Phaedrus asks him to give a speech in response. When Socrates again refuses Phaedrus's request, saying that he is not versed in the art of rhetoric as Lysias is, Phaedrus gives him an offer that he cannot refuse: "Stop playing so hard to get! I know what I can say to make you give a speech [...] I shall never, never again recite another speech for you."⁵⁰ Phaedrus's aggression, albeit playful, is not acceptable behavior for a beloved.

⁴⁶ Griswold 1986, 29–33.

⁴⁷ Moss 2012, 3.

⁴⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 234d1.

⁴⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 234e3.

⁵⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 236d6–236e2.

Kenneth Dover provides background information to elucidate the relationship between lover and beloved. He explains, society sympathized with the persistent ἐραστής and encouraged him, but did not tolerate forwardness or deliberate seductiveness on the part of the ἐρώμενος; we may compare heterosexual societies in which women are expected to say ‘no’ but men are expected to go on trying to make them say ‘yes’.⁵¹

Phaedrus reverses the power dynamic of the lover-beloved relationship by placing Socrates in the role of the younger and passive beloved, who is expected to mimic the *erastēs*, the well-established aristocrat. Where the beloved is usually passive, Phaedrus is actively demanding speeches from Socrates. Where the lover is usually in charge, Socrates seems under the tutelage of Phaedrus and obliged to meet his demands, notwithstanding his resistance to fulfill his duty. This is ironic because Phaedrus is known as the ultimate beloved as he remains in the passive position, loved and cared for by older established men, especially doctors.⁵² Phaedrus’s company speaks to his desires: loving speeches he consorts with sophists, and desiring good health he partners himself with doctors. His inversion of the roles of lover and beloved early in *Phaedrus* foreshadows how Socrates will invert the roles in his second speech, confirming Phaedrus’s identity as (potential) lover of Beauty itself and speaker of truth rather than a passive beloved of doctors and sophists.

⁵¹ K. J. Dover, Plato, *Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 4.

⁵² Griswold 1986, 23–24. “Phaedrus’ love of doctors seems to spring from his effeteness and effeminacy. In the *Symposium* he and Eryximachus leave early, no doubt because late nights and drink are bad for you (see the doctor’s comments at *Symp.* 177c-d), and here he sets out on doctor’s orders for a gentle stroll in the fresh air. Yet the entire *Phaedrus* countermands Acumenus’ orders; Phaedrus’ overpowering love of speeches leads him to sit down again for the rest of the day. Care of the soul’s health replaces concerns for the body’s.”

Phaedrus wants to bask in Socrates' *logoi*, but he does not want to think about them. He is mirroring Lysias—role-playing just as Polus assumes the role of Gorgias in Plato's dialogue of that name. Socrates must bend to Phaedrus's demand or risk losing his relationship with him.⁵³ Socrates exclaims, "How could I possibly give up such treats!"⁵⁴ Not that Socrates would be at a loss intellectually, but the dialectic between Socrates and his young friend would surely end, and along with it, most importantly, their budding friendship. To reaffirm his friendship with Phaedrus, Socrates gives his first speech, covering his head while doing so. He brings Lysias's speech to its logical conclusions, and by doing so provides a twisted account of eros. The action of covering his head is playful in tone, but it suggests the deeper message of this role-playing game: Socrates is willing to "stoop" to Phaedrus's level in order to keep his interest, but he has his limits. The first speech is as low as he is willing to go, and even that makes him uncomfortable. Socrates subtly shows Phaedrus that he is returning to the shadows of the "cave" for his sake.⁵⁵ Covering the head is a sign of regression, of lowering oneself on the lower rungs of the ladder of love or burying one's head in the dirt. He seems embarrassed to lower himself to the ranks of Lysias. Socrates is like the cicada reverting to its nymph form—descending from the treetops to re-bury itself in the ground for another life cycle.

Another clue that the speech is disingenuous is its dramatic introduction. Socrates

⁵³ Cf. Plato *Gorgias* 461b–481b.

⁵⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 236e.

⁵⁵ Plato *Republic* 514a–517a. In Plato's allegory of the cave, a cave-dweller is unchained and dragged out of the cave into the light of day. The cave-dweller's sight gradually adjusts to his new conditions. At first he can only see shadows like those of the puppets projected on the cave wall. Next, he is able to see reflections, then objects around him, then the light of the moon and stars, and ultimately he is able to see the sun as the source of all. After reaching "enlightenment" he returns to the cave to release the other prisoners, only to be scorned by them and accused of being insane.

starts by saying that “there once was a boy, a youth rather, and he was very beautiful, and had very many lovers” and one of these lovers decided to trick the boy to gain his favor.⁵⁶ The “wily” lover convinced the beautiful boy that he was not in love with him, using a persuasive speech of which Socrates pretends to give an account here. Socrates roused Phaedrus’s erotic interest via a flirtatious mimicking of courtship in the beginning of the dialogue.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he is not doing so to initiate Phaedrus as his beloved, but is mimicking Lysias’s relationship with Phaedrus for the purpose of invoking self-reflection in the “lad.”⁵⁸

Moss argues that “love only works for lovers, and the mock courtship emphasizes that Socrates and Phaedrus are not in fact in love; hence Socrates cannot use interpersonal love to lead Phaedrus’ soul.”⁵⁹ However, in this remark she misses the point of the playful tone between Socrates and Phaedrus. The playfulness points to three things: (1) the relationship that does not exist between the two currently, but that could (in the sense of the lover-beloved relationship that exists as an overarching convention in Athens); (2) how the power dynamic between Socrates and Phaedrus shifts during the dialogue, each becoming lover, beloved, and non-lover in turn; and finally, (3) that the flirtation between them points to the flirtation with *logos* to come in the many myths in the dialogue (as if

⁵⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 237b.

⁵⁷ A similar courtship is seen in *Charmides*: “Socrates follows Critias’ advice ‘to pretend’ (155b) that he has a remedy, and as the handsome young man approaches there is a scurrying about by those who wish to sit next to him, during which time Socrates catches fire from seeing the inside of Charmides’s garment and loses his gift of gab. All this is in the ironic spirit of erotic play for which Socrates is famous. But the doubleness does not discredit the notion that the ‘beautiful speech’ can order the soul so much as lead the way to the insight at the end of the dialogue—that the “beautiful speech” capable of charming is Socratic dialogue” (Gellrich 1994, 282).

⁵⁸ Socrates is not satisfied with referring to Phaedrus as a boy (παῖς) here, so he uses the diminutive *meirakiskos* (μειρακίσκος is the diminutive of μειράκιον) to highlight his intellectual immaturity (Plato *Phaedrus* 237b2).

⁵⁹ Moss 2012, 20.

they are climbing the ladder of love throughout their afternoon together). So in these ways Socrates *is* using interpersonal eros between him and Phaedrus that mirrors a philosophical eros for Beauty itself that is the goal of speechmaking in the Platonic dialogues.

Interpersonal love has certain limitations that could hinder the cultivation of philosophical eros, as we saw with Alcibiades' speech in *Symposium*. Alcibiades could not ascend out of the lower rungs of the ladder of love away from his personal connection to Socrates and his body. Moss argues that rhetoric can serve as substitute for interpersonal love because rhetoric "exploits people's passion for the beautiful—here the beauty of *logoi* rather than of human bodies or souls—to lead them towards the Forms."⁶⁰

Philosophers and sophists use love and rhetoric as powerful tools to lead the soul, but they use them in very different ways. On one hand, Socrates offers enchanting speeches that play with ideas for the sake of sparking a love of ideas that, if properly channeled by the interlocutor, transform into a love of discussing (all) ideas, and ultimately the love of wisdom. On the other hand, sophists conjure rhetorical enchantments that do not seek anything beyond a love of an idea or speeches as presented by the sophist. "Only sham rhetoric," Asmis says, "beguiles others; real rhetoric guides souls to self-knowledge through a knowledge of soul."⁶¹ The word-potion served by sophists does not aid in the ascent of the soul as modeled in the ladder of love; the eros cultivated remains on the lower rungs of material reality. In terms of the soul's ability to attain wisdom, sophistic strategies are distracting at best and poisonous at worst.

Descent into vice occurs if the goals for the lover and beloved are in conflict with

⁶⁰ Moss 2012, 20.

⁶¹ Asmis 1986, 157.

one another. Socrates' first speech centers around the consequences of defining love in the manner of Lysias—one's life is filled with a constant struggle between love and reason in the same way that the lover and beloved are in a dramatic conflict with one another. Reflecting Lysias's speech, Socrates then defines love as a desire for what is beautiful, although "men who are not in love have a desire for what is beautiful."⁶² The latter idea is in conflict with Plato's erotic philosophy, where love is an expression of the innate attraction to Beauty Itself that is present, whether latently or not, in all souls.

Socrates explains that one can distinguish a man in love by his "outrageousness" (*hubris*), as his behavior is filled with vice analogous to the tyrant in Plato's *Republic*.⁶³

A lover is ruled by his "inborn desire for pleasure" and goes out of his mind when "desire takes command and drags [him] without reasoning toward pleasure" as it wreaks havoc and "plays tyrant" in the soul.⁶⁴ The lover is

deceitful, irritable, jealous, disgusting, harmful to [the beloved's] property, harmful to his physical fitness, and absolutely devastating to the cultivation of the soul, which truly is, and will always be, the most valuable thing to gods and men."⁶⁵

Socrates' definition of the lover reflects his estimation of Lysias and the sophists who harm the youth of Athens. The definition of love as *hubris* reflects the sophistic conception of love as a desire for pleasure that is exploited for selfish purposes. On the contrary, a non-lover is ruled by the "acquired judgment that pursues what is best" and is

⁶² Plato *Phaedrus* 237d.

⁶³ The use of *hubris* includes "wanton violence, arising from the pride of strength or passion; insolence; lust, lewdness; an outrage on the person, esp. violation, rape" (Liddell and Scott 1889, 826–7).

⁶⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 237d–238b.

⁶⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 241c4–5.

characterized by self-control (*sōphrosynē*), thus “being in his right mind.”⁶⁶ To summarize, Socrates’ first speech characterizes the lover as a potential rapist and the non-lover as a potential teacher; the beloved’s best choice is obvious.

The second half of Socrates’ first speech is a list of all the ways a lover harms the beloved by shaping him into an inferior and easily controlled pawn. For example, a lover wants someone who is easily overpowered physically; he encourages the boy to be “soft,” sit in “dappled shade,” and use cosmetics to compensate for his lack of color.⁶⁷ The lover also cultivates intellectual inferiority and poverty of the soul, as well as rejoicing in the loss of the boy’s wealth, parents, and all possessions. Another great injustice for the beloved is that when he is older and finally wants to reap the benefits of the lover-beloved relationship, the lover’s lust has faded and he regrets the way he treated his beloved. The lover refuses to fulfill the promises he made when he was ruled by *hubris*, now that “right-minded reason is in place of the madness of love (*erotōs kai manias*).”⁶⁸ Griswold notes that this is the first use of “mania” in *Phaedrus*, acting here as a transition to Socrates’ second speech where he discusses divine madness in detail.⁶⁹ The lover and beloved have switched roles. Now the lover “is a refugee, fleeing from those old promises on which he must default by necessity; he, the former lover, has to switch roles and flee” as the beloved pursues the lover in *hubris*, “chasing after him, angry and cursing.”⁷⁰

Socrates’ first speech is an improvement over Lysias’s in that he provides a method

⁶⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 237d–e.

⁶⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 239c.

⁶⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 241a3–4.

⁶⁹ Griswold 1986, 63.

⁷⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 241b.

to uncover the nature of love in order to understand whether a beloved should give his favors to a lover or non-lover. That understood, the speech is itself unsuccessful in providing a convincing argument; the definitions of love and the soul rest on commonly accepted opinions. These are not carefully examined ideas that can serve as a platform for analysis. The failure of this “technical and sober” speech is precisely why Socrates praises dialectical reasoning.⁷¹ Lysias’s speech and Socrates’ first speech serve as evidence that dialectical reasoning is superior to sophistic speechmaking. Even when Phaedrus interjects during Socrates’ first speech, he responds by saying something out of character: “be quiet and listen,” perhaps like an egotistical sophist, but very unlike the Socrates of most other Platonic dialogues.⁷² The irony is that Phaedrus was responding to a question Socrates had asked him. Socrates makes it clear that his speech is antithetical to cultivating dialogue. His second speech, by contrast, serves as an example of philosophical speechmaking that embodies the art of dialectical reasoning. It is not rhetoric that makes speeches artful, it is dialectical reasoning that embodies an “art and not an artless practice.”⁷³ Gellrich remarks, “The cross-currents of meaning bring eros, sophistry, and enchantment into a complicated eddying, as desire becomes both the subject matter of discourse and its dramatized effect.”⁷⁴ Socrates employs the “dramatizing effect” producing eros when he ends his speech abruptly, leaving Phaedrus wanting more.⁷⁵ Socrates announces, “You won’t hear another word from me, and you will have to accept this as the end of the speech” to which Phaedrus responds, “but I

⁷¹ Griswold 1986, 58.

⁷² Plato *Phaedrus* 238c.

⁷³ Plato *Phaedrus* 260e5.

⁷⁴ Gellrich 1994, 286.

⁷⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 241d.

thought you were right in the middle.”⁷⁶ One can hear the frustration in his voice. Phaedrus whines, “So why are you stopping now, Socrates?” Phaedrus is obviously frustrated, which parallels Alcibiades’ sexual frustration with Socrates in *Symposium*. Phaedrus wants Socrates’ marvelous speeches, while Alcibiades wants Socrates’ golden god within via physical intimacy.⁷⁷ Both young men miss the aim of philosophical eros. Socrates stimulates eros by withholding *logos* just as Phaedrus threatened he would do if Socrates did not show off his speechmaking skills. Socrates wants more than speeches—he wants dialogue, and to this end he is successful.

Phaedrus insist that Socrates not “cross the river” back to Athens, but wait out the heat of the afternoon together by “discussing the speeches,” to which Socrates replies,

You’re really superhuman when it comes to speeches, Phaedrus; you’re truly amazing. I’m sure you’ve brought into being more speeches that have been given in your lifetime than anyone else, whether you composed them yourself or in one way or another forced other to make them [...] even as we speak, I think, you’re managing to cause me to produce yet another one.⁷⁸

It is ironic that Socrates the midwife seems to be on the brink of “giving birth” with Phaedrus acting as the doctor promoting a healthy birth. Where the Socratic method gives birth to the inspiration needed for understanding the true nature of reality, Phaedrus’s whiney goading gives rise to contrived and uninspired speeches. Socrates highlights how uninspired his first speech is by ironically stating that the sacredness of the spot they

⁷⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 241d.

⁷⁷ Plato *Symposium* 216e–217a; 222a1–5.

⁷⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 242a5–b5.

reside in is lifting his state to that of a seer or prophet.⁷⁹ He covered his head as if to motion that he is blind to earthly matters, like a seer, and is filled with divine madness. But as Phaedrus forced him into this role it doubly points to his blindness to Beauty itself as he separates himself from the ability to generate discussions with Phaedrus. Asmis notes that, “Socrates delivers his speech, covered up ‘in shame,’” which makes sense because he is mimicking “Isocrates, whose message is shameful” as the speech is an “exercise in the professional rhetorician’s pseudo-art of deception” and not a dialectical exercise in uncovering the true nature of eros or a lover.⁸⁰ However, as Derrida notes, he participated in speechmaking to “imitate the imitators in order to restore the truth of what they imitate: namely truth itself.”⁸¹ Socrates attempted to show Phaedrus (rather than explain) why the sophistic speeches are an image of truth, but Phaedrus was not able to follow. If Phaedrus had seen the flaws of the first speech, the second speech would have been unnecessary and the two could have jumped into a discussion of the nature of rhetoric and speeches straight away.

At the end of Socrates’ first speech, he uncovers his head and is prepared to truly inspire Phaedrus with, as Griswold says, the second speech that acts as a “palinode that is both a remedy and an inoculation—the perfect *pharmakon*.”⁸² In other words, Socrates

⁷⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 237a; 238d; 241e; 242c.

⁸⁰ Asmis 1986, 162–63.

⁸¹ Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” *Dissemination* (trans. Barbara Johnson. London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 61–172, 92. Derrida understands Plato’s *Phaedrus* as revealing writing as a *pharmakon* because it is simultaneously a “remedy” and a “potion.” I interpret the use of the word differently. First, Plato uses it to demarcate the different interpretation and use of *logos* for the sophist and philosopher, showing that not all rational accounts are equally adept at aiding the soul’s ascent. Second, the medicine analogies are also helpful in understanding the powerful effect of *logos* on the soul. The informed doctor who possesses truth will correctly apply the potion, while the “quack” who only seems to know what he is doing will incorrectly apply the potion and potentially harm the patient. Third, the idea of an aphrodisiac or love potion that charms the person to whom it is applied to is comparable to Socrates’ charming use of speeches to seduce a philosophical novice or non-philosopher.

⁸² Griswold 1986, 73.

will model for Phaedrus what it means “to recollect what is truly beautiful” by opening up his soul to divine madness.⁸³ The ensuing recollection steadily restores Socrates’ intellectual vision. In Socrates’ second speech—a palinode in the sense that it serves as an act of contrition for the first inferior speech by recanting the original definition of a lover—it becomes quite clear that vision, whether physical or intellectual, is the main analogy for knowing in *Phaedrus*. Vision is understood as recollection, and Socrates’ second speech is the love potion that he serves to Phaedrus. How Phaedrus takes up the love potion will decide whether it is a poison that makes him love speeches themselves all the more, or a remedy to speech-loving by prompting recollection. Socrates hopes that his speech as a *pharmakon* will open up Phaedrus’ soul to the intellectual vision that serves as recollection.

2.2 The Soul Grows Wings and Begins to Fly: Recollection in the Palinode

Divine madness is viewed as a “going out of one’s mind” or losing control of the self as argued in Lysias’s speech.⁸⁴ To begin his second speech, Socrates explains why madness (*manian*) is not bad (*kakon*) in itself as Lysias argued; on the contrary, madness is beneficial “when it is given as a gift from god.”⁸⁵ Socrates reverses the connotation of divine madness from losing control to gaining ultimate control of the soul, in the same way that *psychagōgia* could be seen as a wizard’s clever trick to enchant for his own benefit.⁸⁶ Socrates makes rhetorical persuasion a stage to gaining control over the soul,

⁸³ Griswold 1986, 73.

⁸⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 231d.

⁸⁵ Plato *Phaedrus*, 244a6–8. *κακός* is defined as “bad of his kind, i.e. worthless, sorry, unskilled” (Liddell and Scott 1889, 394).

⁸⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 244a–245c1.

which can then ascend to the divine Forms. The “greatest of blessings [*agathos*]” come from divine madness.⁸⁷ The term *kakos* means the opposite of *kalos* and *agathos*. Based on Liddell and Scott, the definition of “*kakos*” can refer to bad, mean, ugly, ill-born, cowardly, worthless, sorry, wicked, evil, and poor.⁸⁸ Whereas “*agathos*” can refer to good, gentle, noble, and brave, and *kalos* beautiful, fair, and good.⁸⁹

This term is used again by Socrates when describing the importance of dialectic as a method of division, and not using “bad” rhetoric, which is likened to an unskilled carver. Socrates loves the dialectical process, which he describes as having two components:

The first consists in seeing together things that are scattered about everywhere and collecting them into one kind, so that by defining each thing we can make clear the subject of any instruction we wish to give. Just so with our discussions of love: Whether its definition was or was not correct, at least it allowed the speech to proceed clearly and consistently with itself.⁹⁰

The dialectical opposition of Socrates’ two speeches allowed Phaedrus to collect a wide array of information on the topic of love. This is the first step. The second step is to carve that information: “This, in turn, is able to cut up each according to its species along its natural joints, and to try not to splinter any part, as a bad butcher might do.”⁹¹ The meta-discussion Socrates and Phaedrus engage in after the speeches reveals the educational model inherent to the Socratic method. “Well, Phaedrus, I am myself a lover of these

⁸⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 244a7.

⁸⁸ Liddell and Scott 1889, 394.

⁸⁹ Liddell and Scott 1889, 3 and 397, respectively.

⁹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 265d.

⁹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 265d–e.

divisions and collections, so that I may be able to think and speak.”⁹²

Socrates’ palinode presents a more cohesive whole that is more easily dissected, each part undergoing a rich analysis that leads to further access (recollection) to the Forms. The palinode relays a myth of how the soul recollects Beauty itself. The soul originally is like an incorporeal chariot that consists of a noble horse, a wild horse, and the charioteer. The function of the charioteer is to train his horses to obey his command so that he may reach his goal—a divine banquet at the end of the crowded and noisy procession. Each soul belongs to a particular procession that is led by a god. Those who are led by Zeus are the first to begin and have the easiest road to the Forms. For most, however, the procession to the pinnacle is difficult because the charioteer struggles to control his own horses, and must also compete with all the other chariots as they stumble along the procession that becomes increasingly chaotic. Socrates is using this idea as a form of *psychagōgia*, i.e., to lead Phaedrus to understand that the person who leads him plays a significant role in the care of his soul. If he follows a lesser god or lesser person, such as a sophist, then his path to the Forms will be more difficult. However, if Phaedrus chooses to be led by the Zeus of Athens, a philosopher, then his ascent will be less chaotic.

The well-trained soul that also happened to fall into good company on earth is much more likely to begin the process of recollection, although even then in confusion with “eyes” dimmed. Compared to the power of the soul, the senses, such as eyesight, “are so murky that only a few people are able to make out, with difficulty, the original of

⁹² Plato *Phaedrus* 266b.

the likenesses that they encounter here.”⁹³ Sensory perception is the means to recollect the universal or “original” ideas in which particulars participate. The power of the senses is weak because they cannot easily [or at all] connect particulars to the universal. Where the charioteer at the rim of heaven had a limited banquet on which to feast his eyes, the man relying on his senses has an almost infinite variety of ever-changing material. The seemingly infinite stream of sensory data confuses the mind unless it organizes the perceptions into broader categories or ideas.

Within this world of material flux, where does one even start to filter truth from opinion? This is where the soul comes in. The above description of sensory capacity contrasts starkly with the power of the soul as it participates in the divine banquet:

And we who celebrated it were wholly perfect and free from all troubles that awaited us in times to come, and we gazed in rapture at sacred revealed objects that were perfect, and simple, and unshakeable and blissful. That was the ultimate vision (*eudaimona phasmata*), and we saw it in pure light because we were pure (*kathara*) ourselves, not buried in this thing we are carrying around now, which we call a body, locked in it like an oyster in its shell.⁹⁴

Because the memory of Beauty, Justice, and Self-Control are present in the well-trained soul, the soul is what can link the likeness to the original. The vision of the soul is perfect, and what the soul is able to behold is perfect. Notice the positive words used to describe this divine vision: “rapture” (μακαριωτάτην), “celebrate” (ὠργιάζομεν), “perfect” (ὀλόκληροι), “free of all troubles” (ἀπαθειῖς κακῶν) “simple” (ὀλόκληρα),

⁹³ Plato *Phaedrus* 250b.

⁹⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 250c1–5.

“unshakeable” (ἀτρεμῆ), “blissful” (ἔποπτεύοντες), “pure” (καθαροῖ), “beauty” (κάλλους), and “radiant” (ἐλαμπεν).⁹⁵ These contrast the negative description of the senses attempting to perceive the divine Forms: “murky” (ἀμυδροῶν), “image” (ὁμοιώμασιν), and with “difficulty” (μόγλις).⁹⁶ These negative words mirror the state of the embodied soul, which is “buried” (ἀσήμαντοι), and “locked” (δεδεσμευμένοι) like an “oyster in its shell.”⁹⁷ The positive connotation in these words conjures the specter of a life well-lived (*eudaimonia phasmata*) and the ultimate goal of ascent—to access the divine Forms with intellectual vision.⁹⁸

The rhetorical form directs our attention to the deeper message: ascent is possible only by an inward turn. To “know thyself” is to look within the soul and recollect the knowledge that has always been there. To love a good life necessitates the inward turn. The pleasure of using the inward vision of the soul vastly outweighs the pleasure of sensory vision. Compare it with the pleasure you experience, for example, when gazing at a field of wildflowers on a warm summer day. The sensory world is full of intertwining fleshly delights. That pleasure is mere muck, in Plato’s estimation, compared with the bliss of gazing at Beauty itself. It is like focusing on the oyster’s shell instead of the pearl within, or on the finger pointing to the moon instead of the illuminated moon in all its heavenly glory.

How does the soul’s vision aid living the best and most pleasurable life possible? The goal of ascent in the charioteer analogy is ultimately for the soul to return to the

⁹⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 250c–d1.

⁹⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 250b3–4.

⁹⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 250c5–7.

⁹⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 250c4.

heavenly procession in order to feast on the Forms. In order to prepare the soul for the chariot procession, one must train it properly by honing soul-vision by recollecting the divine Forms. Soul-vision is rational capacity, and is strengthened by formulating rational accounts. Strengthening the vision of the soul “redirects it appropriately” away from the objects of beauty one perceives through the senses and towards the Forms.⁹⁹ The myth alludes to the goal of ascent in lived experience—to improve the soul’s capacity to discern truth from opinion through dialectical reasoning. Ascent necessitates reaching within the soul to grasp what is truly real. The inward turn is made possible by philosophical discussions, which provide the intellectual stimulation needed to understand (and passionately desire to understand) reality all the more.

Ascent is gradual and starts from the bottom up; it begins when the soul perceives physical beauty with the senses. Divine madness in the form of erotic attraction enables the soul to begin the hard work of uncovering its true aim—knowing Beauty itself. Yet, even the philosopher who has the soul with the most potential to rise must struggle to recollect the heavenly feast. What must come first is the proper environment in which the soul is capable of transforming love from sensory objects to a love for intelligible objects. The proper environment for ascent is a beautiful one. On the one hand, eros flourishes in the presence of *kalon*. In *Republic* Plato sates that “both knowledge and truth are beautiful things,” but each act as means to the ultimate goal of knowing the Good. In the same way that light and vision are “rightly thought to be sunlike,” but are not the sun, so knowledge and truth are beautiful but not the form of Beauty; truth is not the goal of

⁹⁹ Plato *Republic* 518d7.

ascent because it is not the Forms.¹⁰⁰ As an expression of the more focused philosophical eros, reason flourishing in the presence of *logos*. The beautiful environment filled with visually and intellectually stimulating people, speeches, and ideas aids the soul in recognizing the beauty that her soul is attracted to, but is not the end in itself. The ultimate goal is to recollect Beauty itself (which leads to recollection of the Good). “That, then, is what every soul pursues, and for its sake does everything.”¹⁰¹

On the other hand, eros diminishes in the presence of ugliness or *kakon*, which is why Socrates believes that no one knowingly desires what is bad.¹⁰² Why then does Alcibiades turn away from ascending via philosophical eros? It is because his power of reason is dim:

You know when our eyes no longer turn to things whose colors are illuminated by the light of day, but by the lights of night, they are dimmed and seem nearly blind, as if clear sight were no longer with them.¹⁰³

It is not that Alcibiades desires any less, it is that he is not able to distinguish what is a shadow of beauty and what is true Beauty. His reason is dimmed by forgetfulness and distraction. Dialectical reasoning would sharpen his reason, but he does not have a passion for dialectics, but the image of Beauty. Alcibiades is distracted by the means to Beauty (beautiful things on the lower rungs of the ladder of love) and cannot see the end of eros (the Forms accessed through ascending the ladder of love).

¹⁰⁰ Plato *Republic* 508e. Where I focus on the form of Beauty in this dissertation, Plato privileges the Good as the source of all Forms, including Beauty (C.f. *Republic* 504d5, 505a–b, 508a, 508e2, 509b, 517b5–c5, 518c5–d1, 532a7). Note that in the *Symposium*, Diotima substitutes “good” for “beautiful” when trying to explain what truly attracts people to beauty (204e1).

¹⁰¹ Plato *Republic* 505d10–11.

¹⁰² Plato *Meno* 78a–b.

¹⁰³ Plato *Republic* 508c4–6. Another explanation could be that his whole soul is not “turned” to the Good, therefore he is “bad, but clever” as his vision is sharp and sight is not dulled, rather his soul is “compelled to serve vice, so that the sharper it sees, the more evil it accomplishes” (Plato *Republic* 519a1–5).

Socrates lingers on beauty in the palinode: “Well, all that was for love of a memory that made me stretch out my speech on longing for the past.”¹⁰⁴ Socrates palpably feels a yearning for the divine banquet; he yearns to remember Beauty itself. Why is Beauty itself the form that Plato invests with the most attention? First, Plato pays special attention to beauty because it captures our senses most vividly, as it is “radiant among the other objects” that we “grasp sparkling through the clearest of our senses.”¹⁰⁵ Vision is the “sharpest of our bodily senses” and “beauty alone has the privilege, to be the most clearly visible and the most loved” of all the objects available to our sensory perception.¹⁰⁶ Sight is the most powerful of the five senses and has a strong connection to recollection, especially of the Form of Beauty itself “because beauty enjoys a special status in the sensible world: we can perceive it with our eyes.”¹⁰⁷ Morgan continues to remark that “only beauty has this allotment and it is therefore most clear and most loveable to us (250d7–e1).”¹⁰⁸ Eros is a powerful force of recollection because we love our beautiful memories and long to return to the time when we experienced those beauties with intensity. Socrates says it is that longing which made him stretch out his speech.

Second, beauty invites the most visceral response. The response our body has to beauty mirrors the response our soul has to it. Attraction to beautiful bodies is a universal human experience. The sight of a beautiful object will excite anyone with a “soul.” Dover explains that Plato “considered that our response to visual beauty is the clearest glimpse

¹⁰⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 250c.

¹⁰⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 250d1–2.

¹⁰⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 250d4–8.

¹⁰⁷ Morgan 2000, 220.

¹⁰⁸ Morgan 2000, 220.

of eternity that our senses can afford us.”¹⁰⁹ Not only is vision our most powerful physical sense, but it also has the ability to stir the soul, specifically when exposed to beauty. Beauty is most immediately felt as a bodily reaction to a beautiful body. In fact, the ancient Athenians believed that the source of eros for the *erastēs* was in the eyes of the *erōmenos*; eye contact is considered an intense form of erotic initiation.¹¹⁰ An example of how Plato expresses the power of eye contact is in *Phaedrus* when “the charioteer looks love in the eye, his entire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire.”¹¹¹ Socrates continues to say that the *erastēs* is “struck by the boy’s face as if by a bolt of lightning.”¹¹² Plato clearly believes that vision has a persuasive influence on eros.

Third, beauty is the most immediate cause of the soul’s erotic attraction to an object that participates in it. Our senses cannot perceive in the sensory world “wisdom” or “self-control” in the same way they can an object of beauty. Plato notes, “it would awaken a terribly powerful love if an image of wisdom came through our sight as clearly as beauty does, and the same goes for other objects of inspired love.”¹¹³ Beautiful bodies awaken the visceral response of physical attraction. Dover notes, “There can be little doubt that the homosexual response was the most powerful emotional experience known to most people for whom he was writing.”¹¹⁴ Plato is not talking about the beauty of any object, but specifically the body of a beloved. This is the concept of stimulating beauty *Phaedrus*

¹⁰⁹ Dover, Plato, *Symposium*, 5.

¹¹⁰ David M. Halperin, “Why is Diotima a Woman? Platonic Eros and the Figuration of Gender and the Figuration of Gender” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, 257–308, ed. by John J. Winkler, Froma I. Zeitlin. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 267. Also see Halperin 1985, 192.

¹¹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 253e5–7.

¹¹² Plato *Phaedrus* 254b4.

¹¹³ Plato *Phaedrus* 250d.

¹¹⁴ Dover, Plato, *Symposium* 5.

understands, as the lover-beloved relationship was the Athenian cultural norm that shaped his view of love.

Ultimately, Plato thinks, a beautiful mind will thrill the soul and provide the same amount of attraction to beauty that a body once did.¹¹⁵ One cannot see a beautiful or wise soul, so the soul of the lover relies first on sight of the beloved to awaken eros. “We have no sense organs to perceive wisdom,” Morgan states, “otherwise our passion for it would be equally intense (250d3-6).”¹¹⁶ If the soul contains an adequate memory of Beauty itself philosophical eros will arise in favor of physical eros for the object of beauty at hand. “When the charioteer sees that face” after he has reigned in the dark horse, “his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-Control.”¹¹⁷ Once eros has awoken it has the possibility of beginning the gradual transformative work towards recognizing its true source of attraction: Beauty itself.

The goal of embodied life is to drown out the distractions of the body and return to the latent memory of the within the soul; the nature of the soul’s ascent is “recollection [*anamnēsis*] of the things our souls saw when it was traveling with god, when it has disregarded the things we now call real and lifted its head to what is truly real instead.”¹¹⁸ The person who is able to recollect the Forms with the most accuracy will live the best life possible, and upon death will return to the heavenly realm to begin the chariot

¹¹⁵ It is worth noting that Nussbaum notes that the “godlike face that represents beauty well and the form of the body (251a) can itself contain traces or signs of character, or the god within (252dff),” and continues “Some lovers, whose vision is ideal but faint, will not notice those signs, and will attach themselves to the body alone, seeking reproduction or casual bodily pleasure. But those who have a more vivid memory of the ideal notice its traces in the beloved and seek a beloved in accordance with the characteristics of the soul that they truly admire” (Nussbaum 2002, 70–71).

¹¹⁶ Morgan 2000, 220.

¹¹⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 245b4–7.

¹¹⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 249c.

procession again. The person who recollects the most about their time in the heavens will also seem like a madman to the uninitiated because he or she will not care for mundane activities. Kathryn Morgan clarifies the connection between recollection and divine madness through memory, which allows “the lover to grasp his god, get a share of him or her, and becomes, again, inspired.”¹¹⁹ Recollection is defined as “the human ability to bring together many sensations into a whole gathered together by reason” based on the experience of the soul in heaven, while memory “is the engine of becoming inspired.”¹²⁰ Socrates says that because ascent is based on recollection, “only a philosopher’s mind grows wings, since its memory always keeps it as close as possible to those realities by being close to which the gods are divine.”¹²¹ The philosopher stands between worlds; he is not enamored of the accumulation of wealth or honor.¹²² Rather, “he stands outside human concerns and draws close to the divine; ordinary people think he is disturbed and rebuke him for this, unaware that he is possessed by god.”¹²³

Other people wonder why the philosopher spends so much time contemplating the nature of reality and pursuing the truth about each topic with such zeal. Why not amuse yourself with some gossip and chit-chat like the rest of us? The rabble says, “Be a body! Seek pleasures! Enjoy the senses!” The philosopher is, in fact, in hot pursuit of pleasure—the highest high, the most intense and enduring satisfaction of *eudaimonia* that

¹¹⁹ Morgan, “Inspiration, Recollection, and *Mimēsis* in Plato’s *Phaedrus*” (In *Ancient Models of Mind: Studies in Human and Divine Rationality*, edited by Andrea Nightingale and David Sedley, 45–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

¹²⁰ Morgan 2010, 62.

¹²¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 249c.

¹²² Cf. Plato *Symposium* 204a for a parallel image of Socrates as a *daimōn* who dwells “between wisdom and ignorance” and *Apology* 31d when Socrates explains that he is under the council of a divine “voice which comes to me.”

¹²³ Plato *Phaedrus* 249d.

is brought about by intellectual stimulation.¹²⁴ Non-philosophers do not get it. Instead, they say the philosopher is out of his mind. Socrates agrees! The philosopher enjoys the gift of divine madness, which allows his soul to soar once again, liberated from the mundane.

The outward sign of ascent is divine madness, which is incited “when he sees the beauty we have down here and [the soul] is reminded of true Beauty; then he takes his wing and flutters in eagerness to rise up, but is unable to do so; and he gazes aloft, like a bird, paying no attention to what is down below—and that is what brings on him the charge that he has gone mad.”¹²⁵ The person in love thinks of nothing but love and in doing so begins to remember true reality—the soul feast at the rim of heaven. The wings of the soul begin to grow and take flight, and he seems more bird than man. Those around him that have not been so aroused think he has lost his mind, when in reality he has just turned it on for the first time. The cause of the soul’s ascent is twofold: first, the exposure and attraction to beauty in the visible world and second, the subsequent recollection of the true Beauty to which the soul-chariot was once exposed in the intelligible realm. Seeing a beautiful body unconsciously activates the soul’s memory of Beauty itself.

The soul does not recognize that it is remembering its “past life” in the heavenly realm; it is attracted to the beautiful body in such a strong way that those around him believe he has gone mad. “This is the best and noblest of all the forms that possession by god can take for anyone who has it or is connected to it, and when someone who loves

¹²⁴ Plato is using *eudaimonia* here to describe the consequence of pursuing the good, that is, personal happiness. Eudaimonism is the ethical approach characteristic of Plato and other Greek philosophers, according to whom “the final aim of a human being’s rational deliberation is his or her happiness or well-being” (White 1999, 497). I agree with White, who argues, based on his reading of *Republic VII*, that Plato uses *eudaimonia* to mean the good for the subject and society, where what leads to personal happiness is not identical to the greater good of the city–state (White 1999, 511–2).

¹²⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 249d.

beautiful boys is touched by this madness he is called a lover (ἐραστής).”¹²⁶ Sexual awakening is ultimately a spiritual awakening, but the soul must go through the gradual process of understanding why he is attracted to beauty before he can grasp Beauty itself. Once the soul is “turned on” by beauty, it has the ability to grow and flourish in order to perform its function: ascend to the source of all reality. The soul chooses to direct itself toward bodily or intellectual delights. A sexual awakening may therefore remain just that.

What is the relationship between recollection and philosophical eros? Is the soul able to recollect the transmigration of the soul, peeping at the rim of heaven, or the nature of attraction to Beauty itself? Mythological tales provide a narrative that channels eros toward its philosophical variety. Philosophical myth helps the novice to ask the right sort of questions about reality, himself, and the true meaning of his life. The overarching images of a myth refer to possible experiences in a person’s life. Like Werner, who explains, “Platonic myth itself can serve as a trigger for intuitive recollection,” I believe that Socrates’ *pharmaka* work to open up the soul and awaken new possibilities.¹²⁷ Intuitive recollection, a term coined by Kathryn Morgan, is an unconscious recollection that occurs in anyone who interacts with a particular that participates in a Form.¹²⁸ The individual is not aware of the Forms, at least not as such, nor is she recollecting that specific Form from a particular. Morgan proposes that a second type of recollection, philosophical reflection, is the “conscious and deliberate cognitive process” of recollecting a Form where “philosophical dialectic is the tool with which we provoke this

¹²⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 249e.

¹²⁷ Werner 2012, 105.

¹²⁸ Werner 2012, 105.

second type of recollection.”¹²⁹ Morgan’s distinction between intuitive and philosophical recollection clarifies how all people experience a sexual awakening of the body, but only some people experience the spiritual awakening and subsequent “divine madness” as the soul recollects Beauty itself.

Morgan and Werner distinguish memories from the process of recollection. Intuitive recollection provides access to the latent memory of the soul’s experience traveling toward the Forms under the tutelage of one of the gods. In the presence of the beloved, one’s soul experiences a strong feeling of connection, nostalgia, or physical eros; it is a visceral experience of the memory of the heavenly procession, which is not rationally informed. Recollection takes place when the lover recognizes that his response to the beloved is more than physical; that it is spiritual as well. If there is a difference between a memory and recollecting Forms, then what turns the soul from intuitively experiencing memory to philosophically recollecting the source of the memory? Werner provides a novel connection between the power of myth and the power of beauty to inspire recollection, understanding both as intuitive recollection.¹³⁰ Intuitive recollection is inspired by beauty because “the lover does not consciously deliberate about the beauty of the beloved; he simply *feels* it,” and the beloved’s beauty “directly moves the lover to a recollection of Beauty.”¹³¹ Myth awakens the latent memories of the soul’s procession in the same way that physical beauty sparks an erotic awakening because “like physical beauty, Platonic myth itself can serve as a trigger for intuitive recollection.”¹³² Werner’s theory corroborates my own thesis that speeches containing myth are a starting point for

¹²⁹ Werner 2012, 104.

¹³⁰ Werner 2012, 105.

¹³¹ Werner 2012, 105.

¹³² Werner 2012, 105.

dialogue in the same way that physical eros is the beginning of philosophical eros.

Kathryn Morgan's distinction between intuitive and philosophical recollection also helps to explain why some people fall madly in love with another person, but never experience the divine madness entailed by passionately desiring Beauty itself.

Just like sex, myth alone will not lead the soul to recollection of Forms, i.e., the soul's ascent. The sophist mistakes the shadowy images of truth for the truth, while the philosopher is able to unify the memories into a narrative pointing to something far greater—Beauty itself. “The philosophical life,” Morgan explains, “assimilates both lover and beloved into representations of their god.”¹³³ Through inspiring philosophical eros that leads to recollection, the philosopher acts as the Zeus of the procession as he leads the mortal charioteers on their way to the divine banquet. The mortal charioteers who follow Zeus are the most ordered as they emulate their leader, therefore have the most time gazing at the Forms.¹³⁴ The best of the mortal charioteers emulate their processional leader by exhibiting godlike qualities as they control their horses. The most godlike charioteers love Beauty itself rather than beautiful busts, poems, or speeches. Each of us has the capacity to lead our own soul towards Beauty with the help of good leader, that is, teacher.

Socrates' speeches are *pharmaka*, but the opposite of Circe's potent brew in Homer's *Odyssey*. His provides a truly healing incantations that promote (not force) recollection. He wants people to recollect, whereas Circe serves Odysseus and his men “malignant drugs” (φάρμακα λύγρ') in order to make them forget their homeland and

¹³³ Morgan 2010, 62.

¹³⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 250b6 and 248c2–3.

turn them into pigs.¹³⁵ Forgetting the Forms sinks one into a lower realm, where life is more animal than divine. Circe leads the soul to forgetfulness while Zeus, representing a philosopher, leads the soul to the divine banquet as *pharmakon*. To be swayed by the wrong *psychagogue* has dire consequences for the soul.

There is a connection to Socrates' use of *pharmakon* to mean enchantment, and the similar word *pharmakos* that means scapegoat. Historically, Pan (not the god himself, but a representation or stand in) is the scapegoat. After a natural disaster, Pan was “ritually burdened with the impurities of the entire community and then driven across the frontier—if he was not actually killed and his ashes thrown into the sea.”¹³⁶ It is no wonder Pan hated city life. The *pharmakos* is double natured in that it “is thought of as both the source of the trouble and (as the name itself makes clear) the *pharmakos*, i.e., the medicine, the curative charm.”¹³⁷ Because Plato believes that Pan and speech are etymologically related, perhaps he understood speeches as that which had the potential to cure Athenians of their intellectual malaise.¹³⁸ If only Socrates could act as a scapegoat to take on the intellectual sins of Athens, and sacrifice himself for the sake of Athens. Socrates' trial and death seem to point to him as a Pan-like *pharmakos*, but instead of being the source of the Athenians intellectual stagnation, he was the one who so vocally pointed out the lack of wisdom in the wisest of all Greek city-states.

¹³⁵ Homer *Odyssey* X 220–240.

¹³⁶ Borgreud 1988, 71.

¹³⁷ Borgreud 1988, 72.

¹³⁸ Plato *Cratylus* 408c–d. All subsequent references to Plato's *Cratylus* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

2.3 Beyond the Palinode: Carving Up the Dialogue

Why does Plato's *Phaedrus* not end with the palinode? If the dialogue ended on Socrates' second speech, then the love Phaedrus feels for Socrates' myth would end there, and fade the next time Phaedrus heard another rousing speech. At best the myth of the palinode would spur self-knowledge. At worst it would serve as another distraction from the pursuit of wisdom. Instead of ending on Socrates' spectacularly charming speech, the dialogue continues with an investigation of speeches, rhetoric, and writing. It is thinking about speeches, not the speeches themselves, that moves Phaedrus from the love of speeches to the love of wisdom. The speech arouses eros in Phaedrus, and the discussion about speeches redirects this eros towards a higher object—the source of all erotic attraction, Beauty itself. By applying dialectical reasoning to the truth about speeches and the soul, Socrates is leading Phaedrus's soul up the ladder of love to better and better objects of desire, the goal and ultimate rung leading to the Forms.

Griswold states that the philosophical import of Plato's *Phaedrus* and the reason why he writes in the dialogue format is that the dialogue itself “shows that our talk about ourselves must extend to talk about our talk about ourselves.”¹³⁹ Plato's dialogue format opens up the possibility for more and more philosophical discussions, writes Griswold, because “each discourse seems to undermine itself in a way that generates yet another discourse.”¹⁴⁰ Plato's body of work is a ladder of love in itself! Morgan's theory aligns with mine as she believes “both myth and dialogue are not the most serious form of

¹³⁹ Griswold 1986, 232.

¹⁴⁰ Griswold 1986, 233.

philosophy.”¹⁴¹ When Morgan says “dialogue” she is referring to Plato’s written work, not the dialectical method. She claims that Plato’s dialogues do not contain knowledge, but are an “aspiration towards it that will be realised, if at all, in real-life philosophical discussion.”¹⁴² The dialogues and Socrates’ speeches contained within are training the reader and audience to think differently.

Morgan and Griswold agree that the discussion *following* the reading of Platonic dialogues is the ultimate purpose. The speechmaking, mythmaking, and dialogue-generation all inspire a desire to learn more about the provocative topics that arise. The best way to learn, according to Plato, is to participate in *elenchus* and rigorous dialectical reasoning. The purpose of learning is to gain wisdom concerning the all reality. In other words, it is to recollect the Forms through dialectical ascent fueled by philosophical eros. If Phaedrus was excited about Lysias’s speech, and then overwhelmed by Socrates’ palinode, how much more passionate will he be when he gains understanding about *why* he is attracted to speeches, how his soul is shaped by *logos*, and the source of all knowledge that far surpasses the images of truth he has encountered thus far. How Lysias’s “feast of eloquence” pales in comparison to the feast of the Forms!¹⁴³

Socrates criticizes both the method of the sophists and the practice of the lover-beloved relationship. Both sophistry and sex may passively awaken a part of the soul through an attraction to the sophist’s speeches or the beloved’s body, but on their own, these methods do not lead to active self-awareness. The next step is thinking about why

¹⁴¹ Morgan 2000, 211. As stated in Chapter 1, the goal of myth and charming speeches (or a dialogue) is to seduce the non-philosopher or philosophical novice to long for a truth that is beyond images, opinions, and commonly held assumptions.

¹⁴² Morgan 2000, 211.

¹⁴³ Plato *Phaedrus* 227b7.

speeches and bodies promote eros in the soul, using dialectical reasoning to reach informed conclusions. Instead, the sophist and the *erastēs* cultivate eros that is directed at images of beauty and not Beauty itself. For example, in the charioteer analogy the poet shapes his beloved like a statue—to imitate himself and the god he followed in the heavenly procession. “We have seen how the lover chooses a beloved who imitates beauty well,” Morgan writes, “and then works to make him into the best possible representation of their god. He treats the beloved as a cult statue and strives to perfect it.”¹⁴⁴ The sophist, like the poet, creates his beloved pupil in his own image through *logos*—an image of himself that is the image of his patron god. The beloved is then the image of an image—far removed from the source. By contrast, the philosopher is able to correctly direct the soul to the ultimate object of erotic longing through engaging the novice in dialectical discussions. To be passively shaped is inferior to “actively creating not out of a memory, but through challenging the underlying truth the memory points to—the Forms.”¹⁴⁵ The philosopher’s “beloved” is not created as an image of the Forms, but is instead trained to create ideas that reflect the Forms as accurately as possible.¹⁴⁶

Jessica Moss argues that soul-leading is the theme that unites the two disparate parts of *Phaedrus*—the speeches and the discussion about the speeches.¹⁴⁷ Both the speeches with their rhetorical flourishes and mythical stories, as well as the dialogue dissecting the nature of rhetoric, fulfill the unifying function of *psychagōgia*. A

¹⁴⁴ Morgan 2010, 62.

¹⁴⁵ Morgan 2010, 62.

¹⁴⁶ “Student” or “interlocutor” are better terms than “beloved” because the philosopher’s beloved is Beauty itself.

¹⁴⁷ Morgan 2010, 62. “The vocabulary of imitation and likeness is obtrusive. Things on earth, like the beloved, that remind us of the Forms are *homoiōmata*, likenesses (250a6, b3), and imitate the Form. The lover lives imitating his god and bringing the beloved into a state of similarity to himself and the god. No wonder that traditional poets and their traditional *mimēsis* rank so low in the dialogue’s hierarchy of lives: why make dead motionless copies when you can make living and moving re-presentations?”

psychagōgue leads the soul by persuasion. One cannot lead someone who does not want to be led, so Socrates creates charming speeches that attract speech-lovers. But is *Phaedrus* as a dialogue really persuasive? The dialogue contains stimulating speeches on the topic of love, a stimulating topic in itself, but does it really persuade Phaedrus that philosophical discussions are superior to rhetorical speeches? Socrates says that good speeches, “must be put together like a living creature,” but does he meet his own criteria in his two speeches and does Plato meet this requirement in the dialogue as a whole?¹⁴⁸ Moss claims that “the dialogue itself famously seems to be a misshapen jumble,” which she justifies by explaining that it begins with a rich series of speeches on love and ends in a more serious and “dry” discussion on the nature of rhetoric.¹⁴⁹ The three main parts of *Phaedrus*—the opening scene, the three speeches, and the dialogue about rhetoric and writing—each act as *psychagōgic pharmakon* in the gradual progression to truth by means of ascent; when taken together the three parts initiate one into the mysteries of philosophy.

The prerequisite for ascent in this dialogue is that the interlocutor already love speeches. If the audience has Phaedrus’s *logomania*, the speeches act as the love potion that draws out the eros of the speech-lover like an aphrodisiac draws out latent erotic feelings. I claim that the three parts of the dialogue work together as a harmonious whole in the same way the three parts of the soul need to work together in a singularity of purpose in order to perform its function well.¹⁵⁰ Asmis observes that the dialogue “moves from a display of pseudo-rhetoric to a revelation of genuine rhetoric,” which reflects

¹⁴⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 264c2–5.

¹⁴⁹ Moss 2012, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Plato *Republic* 368c–369a.

Socrates' "transition from *psychagōgia* as beguilement" common in sophistry "to *psychagōgia* as guidance of the soul" that defines philosophy.¹⁵¹ Philosophical myths aid the soul's ascent, while common myths distract from the pursuit of self-knowledge and the Forms. Philosophical rhetoric inspires eros directed to the Forms, whereas the rhetoric used by sophists directs the audience to his or her own glory. In the same way, *pharmakon* is both poison and cure, depending on who administers it. The medicinal analogy works if you understand that a knowledgeable doctor who administers a medicine correctly will help cure a person's ailment, while a doctor who does not understand the nature of the ailment or the nature of the curative could help the patient accidentally, but will most likely cause damage.

Even in *Symposium* each speech signifies a similar progression. Instead of two people competing for the most convincing speech, as in *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium* contains a variety of speechmakers from various backgrounds competing for Agathon's attention. The friendly competition creates a potential for a rich dialectic. Although there is little memorable *dialogue* about love—excepting Agathon and Socrates' short debate—the speeches each improve upon one another, culminating in Socrates' speech that attempts to resolve many of the puzzles raised by the previous speeches, as Sheffield argues.¹⁵² The way the speeches respond to one another mimics the dialectical method. Socrates is modeling how one should pursue wisdom. "Throughout this progression," Asmis writes,

Socrates serves as an example of a true rhetorician and true '*psychagogue*.'

Against Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates as conjuror of souls [in *Birds*], Plato

¹⁵¹ Asmis 1986, 157.

¹⁵² Sheffield 2009, 65.

sets a portrait of Socrates as a *'psychagogue'* who guides souls to the truth by seeking it himself.¹⁵³

Unlike Alcibiades' portrayal of Socrates in *Symposium* as a magical satyr who forces him to follow his commands with no free choice, Socrates is leading the way for us to take control of our own souls out of the Bacchic frenzy of philosophical eros. The magician is really midwife.

Nevertheless, to lump Socrates in with sophists, rhetoricians, and poets seems to cast a shadow on his intentions and character. If Socrates is supposed to present a healthy alternative to the sophists, then why is he using the same distracting tactics? If "dialectic is frequently presented as a use of language opposed in every way to sophistic enchantment," then why does Socrates participate in *psychagogic* enterprises, presenting his *pharmakon* to those in need?¹⁵⁴ Gellrich states there are "historical continuities between the magician, the sophist, and the dialectician" and that those connections point to Plato's greater goal—cultivating the novice's passion for philosophy.¹⁵⁵ Socrates uses charming speeches as a means to an end, just as the sophists do, but they have different ends. For Socrates, it is to care for the soul of another by inspiring ascent, while for the sophist it is to care for the self in terms of lower goods like wealth, honor, and even physical pleasure.

It is as crucial for Socrates to hook the audience's interest as it is for sophists; both are vying for the souls of Athens. Rhetoric and philosophy both "lead souls by persuasion," but philosophy does not stop there. After Socrates has persuaded someone

¹⁵³ Asmis 1986, 157.

¹⁵⁴ Gellrich 1994, 277.

¹⁵⁵ Gellrich 1994, 277.

that he is worth listening to or has something of value to say, he continues to lead the soul to truth by dialogue.¹⁵⁶ A dialogue insists on mutual participation. One difference between listening to (or repeating) speeches is that the act is ultimately passive, whereas engaging in dialogue is active. Ascending from speech to dialogue is like transitioning from love of a person's body to love of his soul. The body's beauty charms the lover to desire more of the person, leading to the lover asking questions (*erōtan*) in order to know the soul within the beautiful body. Dialogue is superior to speeches because it helps train the soul to think for itself, but dialogue is not the end either; it is only a means to that end: wisdom through the soul's access to the divine Forms via dialectical ascent. It is the Forms that make true knowledge possible, and it is the soul that has access to the Forms as it ascends. The connection between the source of wisdom and the soul is the *desire* for true knowledge. This *desire* makes persuasion necessary. Without desire, there is no pursuit of wisdom; philosophical eros is necessary for the soul to ascend. Some people need guidance in the form of dialogue that aids recollection of eros, as through the ladder of love. Recollection about the true nature of Beauty itself cannot be forced upon someone, just as true love cannot be forced upon the passive object of desire.

Socrates' critique of Lysias's definition of love is an implicit critique of the lover-beloved tradition and sophistic education. He explains that sophists are inferior leaders of the soul because "they are ignorant of dialectic."¹⁵⁷ The sophists lack the skills and tools needed to master rhetoric, and thus cannot properly educate others in the art of it:

It is their ignorance that makes them think they have discovered what rhetoric is when they have mastered only what is necessary to learn as preliminaries. So they

¹⁵⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 271c.

¹⁵⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 269b6.

teach the preliminaries and imagine their pupils have received a full course in rhetoric, thinking the task of using each of them persuasively and putting them together into a whole speech is a minor matter, to be worked out by the pupils from their own resources?¹⁵⁸

Phaedrus is participating in the shared activity of learning by engaging Socrates after the alluring palinode. He agrees with Socrates' critique of sophistry, and asks how anyone could become a successful rhetorician; by natural talent, knowledge, and practice, he replies, "to the extent that you lack any one of them, to that extent you will be less than perfect."¹⁵⁹ Socrates adds that dialectical questioning and speculation on nature is a prerequisite for a successful rhetorician in the same way that a doctor needs to master medicinal arts.

In both cases we need to determine the nature of something—of the body in medicine, of the soul in rhetoric. Otherwise, all we'll have will be an empirical and artless practice. We won't be able to supply, on the basis of art, a body with the medicines and diet that will make it healthy and strong, or a soul with the reasons and customary rules for conduct that will impart to it the convictions and virtues we want.¹⁶⁰

If sophists cannot define what rhetoric is, how can they teach others the art of it? If rhetoric is essentially leading the soul, then what use is a rhetorician who knows nothing of the soul? Socrates likens the sophist to a doctor who knows nothing of the body—in both cases the person imparting their "artless practice" has the potential to do more harm

¹⁵⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 269b7–c5.

¹⁵⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 269d5–6.

¹⁶⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 270b3–10.

than good. Any good accomplished would be accidental. No one would entrust his body to a quack; why allow one to care for your soul?¹⁶¹

The way to practice an art is to start with knowledge. Socrates provides an example of this type of thinking:

Isn't this the way to think systematically about a thing? First, we consider whether the object regarding which we intend to become experts and capable of transmitting our expertise is simple or complex. Then, if it is simple, we must investigate its power: What things does it have what natural power of acting upon? By what things does it have what natural disposition to be acted upon? If, on the other hand, it takes many forms, we must enumerate all of them and, as we did in the simple case, investigate how each is naturally able to act upon what and how it has a natural disposition to be acted upon by what.¹⁶²

Socrates goes on to list all the types of questions the rhetorician must consider in order to practice his art. "Since the nature of speech is in fact to direct the soul," he explains, "whoever intends to be a rhetorician must know how many kinds of souls there are."¹⁶³ Of course, this is a daunting task, as Phaedrus points out. Yet Phaedrus does not have a better method to present, so Socrates throws out what he believes a sophist would say—namely, that these speeches should touch on the "likely," not necessarily the true.¹⁶⁴

Phaedrus agrees without hesitation, and so Socrates moves the conversation to the art of

¹⁶¹ Cf. Plato *Gorgias* 459b–465d. Socrates explains that the nature of rhetoric is artless flattery; it is like applying cosmetics to the soul in that it produces an "alien charm" in appearance only (465b). Socrates explains to Polus that rhetoric is bad because it "aims at what is pleasant, ignoring the good, and I insist that it is not an art but a routine, because it can produce no principle in virtue of which it offers what it does, nor explain the nature thereof, and consequently is unable to point to the cause of each thing it offers. And I refuse the name of art to anything that is irrational" (465a).

¹⁶² Plato *Phaedrus* 270d.

¹⁶³ Plato *Phaedrus* 271c.

¹⁶⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 272c.

writing.

Some scholars call true rhetoric, or at least Plato's idea of it, "philosophical rhetoric."¹⁶⁵ This distinction confirms my reading of Plato's critique of sophistic rhetoric as a failure to persuade the audience to discover the truth of the topic and not merely various opinions on the subject that seem likely. Persuasion is the focus of Plato's critique of sophistic rhetoric in the sense that it refers to "arousing desire in the auditor's soul."¹⁶⁶ Persuasion does not mean that you convince someone that your interpretation is correct, but that they care about the subject and desire to know the truth of the matter. The true rhetorician must know the truth of the topic in order to persuade an audience, and the method of attaining this truth is collection and division through dialectical means. Yunis observes that "in the *Gorgias* Plato demonstrated that if the rhetor does not have clear, firm knowledge of the subject of his discourse, it will lead to harm for all parties," so "*Phaedrus* takes up where the *Gorgias* left off."¹⁶⁷ Using the definition of rhetoric as *psychagōgia* in *Phaedrus*, one can see that if the person who is leading the soul does not know the goal of his "procession," then both parties will remain lost. It is possible that they may stumble upon the truth, but it is more likely that they will start down a dangerous path.

Dialectics is needed to clarify the truth for the rhetorician as it enhances his ability to persuade. "By thrusting philosophy into the very heart of rhetoric and remaking it in philosophy's image," Yunis adds, "the *Phaedrus* completes the job begun in the

¹⁶⁵ Yunis 2005, 102.

¹⁶⁶ Yunis 2005, 103.

¹⁶⁷ Yunis 2005, 103.

Gorgias.¹⁶⁸ The problem with understanding rhetoric as using dialectics to discover the truth of the matter is that it does not guarantee that the rhetorician will use dialectical reasoning to persuade his audience of the truth instead of using dialectics to fortify a self-aggrandizing argument. An example of this is in the first speech of Socrates, where “he follows Lysias by arguing in favor of the non-lover.”¹⁶⁹ This reveals how a sophist can manipulate knowledge gained from dialectical reasoning and use it “rhetorically for a corrupt end.”¹⁷⁰ What is the incentive to use rhetoric philosophically? Plato answers this question by constructing the rhetorically superior palinode.

One reason Yunis provides for the superiority of the “Great Speech” is its power to “arouse eros” by depicting it so vividly in the charioteer myth.¹⁷¹ Plato understands that “mimetic art, both visual and poetic, has the ability to arouse the desires and appetites of those who are spectators of that art.”¹⁷² The palinode itself incites eros, but eros that is directed toward a specific goal—not just rhetorically superior speeches, but the truth the speeches are meant to reveal. Yunis argues that Socrates’ palinode uses rhetoric to “argue for the priority of philosophy.”¹⁷³ The aim of the palinode is “rhetorical persuasion, not philosophical dialectic” and for it to succeed the “speech must actually be compelling.”¹⁷⁴ The speech does not speak the truth; it points to the truth and invites the audience to seek it. The previous examination of recollection in the palinode shows how Plato creates a myth that reinforces the need to lead the soul via philosophical rhetoric (seeking truth that provokes ascent to divine Forms) rather than sophistic rhetoric

¹⁶⁸ Yunis 2005, 102–3.

¹⁶⁹ Yunis 2005, 105.

¹⁷⁰ Yunis 2005, 105.

¹⁷¹ Yunis 2005, 112.

¹⁷² Yunis 2005, 112.

¹⁷³ Yunis 2005, 106.

¹⁷⁴ Yunis 2005, 106.

(seeking convenient images of truth that hampers that ascent).

If the palinode does produce a rhetorically superior speech by creating a myth that leads the souls of its audience to love seeking truth, then why does Phaedrus never become a philosopher? If the palinode is, as Yunis describes, “a formal, rhetorical expression of Socrates’ erotic force,” then why didn’t it lead Phaedrus to a life of dialectical questioning and contemplation?¹⁷⁵ A *pharmakon* either promotes health or harm. Who are the doctors of the soul that have the expertise to apply the potion correctly? What happens if the *logos*-potion is administered improperly? Does it poison the soul instead of curing the soul? It seems that Socrates is unable to cure Phaedrus and Alcibiades, among others, so does this mean that Socrates as a philosopher is not properly equipped to heal the soul?¹⁷⁶ If Socrates likens a doctor curing disease to a philosopher dispelling ignorance, then why can’t Socrates properly cure souls of the disease of ignorance?

Alcibiades’ fall from philosophical eros is memorable. When he drunkenly interrupts the symposium after the conclusion of Socrates’ speech, he is asked to participate in the night’s activities by constructing a speech praising love.¹⁷⁷ Alcibiades agrees, with a caveat—he will praise Socrates instead. This does not seem like a stretch since Socrates was likened to the *daimōn* eros in his own speech. Diotima’s speech likened Socrates to the eros of the philosophical myth. The presence of Socrates is the deep well of truth from which Alcibiades’ soul wishes to draw. Socrates’ life is dedicated to pursuing wisdom with the strongest erotic urgency. Alcibiades absorbs this magnetic

¹⁷⁵ Yunis 2005, 121.

¹⁷⁶ Socrates accepts the complaint and calls himself a laughable doctor “γελοῖος ἰατρός” (*geloios iatros*), his treatment not only does not cure the disease, it worsens it (*Protagoras* 340e).

¹⁷⁷ Plato *Symposium* 212d.

energy, but is unable to use it to care for his own soul. Alcibiades even exclaims that Socrates, “makes it seem like my life isn’t worth living,” but when he leaves the presence of his lover, he “goes back to his old ways: he caves into his desire to please the crowd.”¹⁷⁸ Socrates, he adds, “makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time, while all that matters is what I neglect: my personal shortcomings, which cry out for closest attention.”¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Alcibiades stubbornly refuses to listen to Socrates: “I stop my ears and tear myself away from him, for, like the Sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die.”¹⁸⁰ Alcibiades is ultimately unwilling to turn his soul away from lower goods to higher ones.

The description of how Alcibiades’ soul responds to Socrates mirrors the description of the “bad” horse in Socrates’ palinode. Alcibiades’ desire for honor from the crowd, and even the pleasure of Socrates’ body and mind, are out of control. In this sense does Alcibiades mirror the dark horse of the soul that is unwilling, at first, to obey the charioteer’s command. Alcibiades quakes and shudders, sweats and frets whenever he is in the presence of his “lover” Socrates. The dark horse “is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire” before it begins to pull the charioteer wildly towards the boy.¹⁸¹ The soul is driven wild in the presence of beauty. The myth in *Phaedrus* explains why some lovers are able to control their dark horse and begin a lifelong friendship with the beloved, viz., that they train the appetitive dark horse to obey the command of reason. When the dark horse is out of control and

¹⁷⁸ Plato *Symposium* 216a1.

¹⁷⁹ Plato *Symposium* 216a5–b1.

¹⁸⁰ Plato *Symposium* 216a5–b1.

¹⁸¹ Plato *Symposium* 215e–216a, 218a–b5. Compare this to the description of the struggle to rein in the bad horse in the company of the beloved in *Phaedrus* 253e–255a1 as well as the soul’s first erotic experience at 251a1–252b1.

“leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasure of sex” the “other two resist, angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are dreadfully wrong.”¹⁸² After the charioteer has begun the process of training his horses—one that Alcibiades ostensibly never started—he is again overcome by the beauty of the beloved, but this time “his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-control.”¹⁸³ Sexual attraction brought back the memory of Beauty itself like a “bolt of lightning” and the charioteer now has a clear idea of what he is attracted to when he sees the beauty of his beloved, and is able to instruct him on the Forms while simultaneously harnessing the erotic passion for Beauty to philosophical discussions.¹⁸⁴

Not every beloved will have the advantage of a virtuous lover. Socrates offers a cautionary tale to those who cannot tame the dark horse:

If, on the other hand, they adopt a lower way of living, with ambition in place of philosophy, then pretty soon when they are careless because they have been drinking or for some other reason, the pair's undisciplined horses will catch their souls off guard and together bring them to commit that act which ordinary people would take to be the happiest choice of all; and when they have consummated it once, they go on doing so for the rest of their lives, but sparingly, since they have not approved of what they are doing with their whole minds. So these two also live in mutual friendship (though weaker than the philosophical pair), both while

¹⁸² Plato *Phaedrus* 254a3–b1.

¹⁸³ Plato *Phaedrus* 254b4–6.

¹⁸⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 254b4.

they are in love and after they have passed beyond it.¹⁸⁵

Plato's palinode does not typecast a lover as one thing and a non-lover as its opposite in the manner of Lysias's simplistic speech. In the more complex charioteer analogy, the variation among souls is explained. If one has trained the dark horse of appetite well, then the soul is free to begin ascent. If not, the appetites will rule over the soul like an all-consuming tyrant.¹⁸⁶ Socrates' myth explains why some people exposed to the *pharmakon* of philosophical speeches and dialectical charms are unable to direct their eros into philosophical eros. Philosophy is not a cure-all. Like any medicine, it must be administered properly, i.e., practiced with a passionate eros within an informed dialectic aiming at Beauty itself. Not everyone will grow wings and fly toward the feast of the Forms. It is a challenging, risky, and gradual process. Highlighting the failure of a few interlocutors places a mirror in front of many potential readers. When they see their reflection in the mirror, which character do they see—Phaedrus, Alcibiades, or Socrates?

Plato's dialogues are as beguiling as they are illuminating. Although the palinode presents a more unified argument than did either Lysias's speech or Socrates' first speech, it is not perfect or complete. The purpose of the second speech is not to provide all the answers, but to inspire a desire to ask questions about the speech itself in pursuit of wisdom. For this reason, Griswold writes, "Socrates has cast himself in the role of Phaedrus' lover, but only with the purpose of yoking Phaedrus into a joint pursuit of philosophy."¹⁸⁷ If Phaedrus joins Socrates in his love of wisdom, they both benefit; if he fails, he will continue to recite speeches that lead the soul to more desire for speeches and

¹⁸⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 256b–d.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Plato *Republic* 562a–576b; 577c–578a; 581c–d; 603c.

¹⁸⁷ Griswold 1986, 136.

nothing more, and perhaps lead others to worldly desires.

CHAPTER 3

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

SELF-MOVERS OR BEAUTY IN THE SKY WITH *DAIMŌNS*

Phaedrus responds, “By all means, let’s talk.”

— Plato *Phaedrus* 259e1

The soul's self-motion is the conceptual hinge that connects Socrates' charming speeches and the novice's ascent. The motion is fueled by philosophical eros, as a chariot's movement is powered by horses. If the soul were a passive receptacle that ascended to Beauty itself when properly filled with virtue by a teacher, then the lover-beloved model of education would function well. However, if the soul must actively move itself towards wisdom and cannot be compelled by force, then the lover-beloved relationship is not the best educational model. Socrates provides an alternative model that takes into consideration the nature of the soul as essentially self-moving in order to explain the subsequent role of philosopher-educators. The best educator acts as a midwife by creating charming speeches that help the student give birth to ideas; the educator acts as a *daimōnic* architect as he constructs a beautiful environment in between wisdom and ignorance that opens up the novice to self-reflection and dialectical exchanges.

Using compelling analogies and mythological characters in his captivating palinode from *Phaedrus*, Socrates likens eros to a nourishing stream, the soul's ascent to flying, the soul to a chariot, recollection to wings, and true knowledge to a divine banquet. In *Symposium*, Socrates speaks through the mouthpiece of Diotima in a pointed role reversal that engages his audience and provides the ladder of love as an ascent narrative. In this chapter and the subsequent one, I will discuss each of these analogies, specifically how they are tailored to charm Phaedrus and young students generally by aiding self-motion towards Beauty itself. It is thinking about speeches, not the speeches themselves, whereby Phaedrus moves his soul from the love of speeches to the love of wisdom.

3.1 The Soul as the “Spring of Motion”: Self-Movers and Philosophical Eros

Socrates exposes Phaedrus to a life that is not limited to loving speeches. Phaedrus, like many people, needs someone to turn him towards a life of wisdom. “Phaedrus is living proof,” Werner notes, “of the fact that most nonphilosophers are perfectly satisfied with their current way of life, and see no need to change.”¹ Without Socrates’ enchanting speeches and discussions about those speeches, Phaedrus would in all likelihood have continued to live his life as a lover of speeches and beloved of speechmakers. This introduces a question of freedom: Who is *really* in control of Phaedrus’s life and future? Is Socrates the master of Phaedrus’s future?² Does Socrates force Phaedrus to change for the better, or does he open up possibilities for Phaedrus’s future? Is Phaedrus’s soul in his own hands? Answering these questions, for Phaedrus and for the reader of Plato’s dialogues, aids the process of gaining self-knowledge and thus nourishes the soul.

The myth of the palinode magnifies life’s possibilities. Phaedrus is a young man, probably in the throes of his sexual awakening: the perfect time for Socrates to teach him about the true nature of erotic love—the goal being spiritual awakening. However, Phaedrus will not have to relinquish his love of speeches in order to love wisdom. He could instead see the limitations of speechmaking and not let his love of speeches dominate his soul. Socrates’ charioteer analogy in the *Phaedrus* does not entail a rejection of erotic (physical) attraction and love, rather ascent as the awakening of the soul to philosophical eros.³ Philosophers desire to “lead the soul” out of the oyster shell,

¹ Werner 2012, 123.

² Based on the verdict from Socrates’ trial, the jury would have had an affirmative answer to this question.

³ Gellrich 1994, 292: “But in *Phaedrus* it is a question of purifying the soul by using the body as a *psychagōgic* instrument, rather like the way it is used by Diotima in *Symposium* as an essential vehicle for transcendence to the ultimate erotic vision of Forms.”

so to speak, in order for their interlocutors to strengthen their wings. According to the charioteer myth, the soul must first begin to recollect the divine banquet of Forms before the wings sprout. Attraction to the beloved is the soul recollecting Beauty itself. Does the object of one's desire "move" the soul, allowing it to ascend through recollection?

Socrates begins the palinode with an explanation of the soul's nature by stating, "Every soul [ψυχή] is immortal."⁴ Every soul is a self-mover for the reason that it is the source of motion and not what is moved.⁵ What is the mover and what is the moved? For Socrates, the moved is the body and the mover is the soul. This also reflects the traditional nature of eros in the lover-beloved relationship: the lover loves and the beloved is the object of love.⁶ Socrates wants to refashion the idea of eros and education by stating that the soul moves itself as it loves towards the true object of love as wisdom. The object of love does not move the soul, it is the soul wishing to possess the object that causes the soul to move. Griswold clarifies by explaining that, "if the soul desires what appears to it to be good and beautiful, the appearance may be said to move the soul, but only because the soul values the appearance."⁷ In this sense, the soul moves itself from the process of judging an object as beautiful and thus desiring it, rather than the beautiful object forcing the soul towards it. Although the examination of this passage can be technical and complex, for my purposes what matters is that each soul will move itself according to the way it understands (and consequently desires) beauty. In other words, self-motion explains why "people choose in accordance with their nature, character, and

⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 245c6.

⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 245c.

⁶ Cf. Griswold: 1986, 78–87 for an in-depth analysis of Socrates' argument that the soul is immortal. For my purposes, I examine why Socrates begins his speech with the idea of the immortal self-moving soul; my argument is not concerned with whether Socrates proves that this idea is true or not.

⁷ Griswold 1986, 87.

recollection the images they desire.”⁸

The philosopher who pursues self-knowledge and Beauty itself will move himself in a different way than the sophist who pursues self-honor and the beauty of speeches; the philosopher ascends towards wisdom and the nonphilosopher remains stagnant or descends into ignorance. Wisdom and ignorance do not “move,” rather it is the soul in response to wisdom and ignorance that changes. The soul that has recollected the Forms of the divine banquet understands that Beauty and the Good nourish the soul, not images of beautiful and good things. The forgetful soul will not move itself toward Beauty itself because it does not know that it is the ultimate object of desire. Similarly, the youth who is deceived by a sophist about the best life—in Phaedrus’s case it is listening to speeches and composing them—would be an example of both the soul of the sophist and of the youth “moving itself defectively, but nevertheless moving itself.”⁹ Even if he is aware that he is deceiving the audience by using rhetoric to pander to the masses, the sophist is still deceiving himself that his life is the best one possible.

Socrates explains that to understand self-motion, “we must first understand the nature of the soul, divine or human, by examining what it does and what is done to it.”¹⁰ Not coincidentally, it is by examining the soul that they both participate in the divine madness of philosophical eros that passionately pursues self-knowledge. The purpose of Socrates’ speech is caring for the immortal soul of Phaedrus. He indicates this after the palinode when they discuss rhetoric, again with a focus on the soul. Socrates defines rhetoric as “a way of directing the soul by means of speech” and likewise that “the nature

⁸ Griswold 1986, 87.

⁹ Griswold 1986, 172.

¹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 245c3–5.

of speech is to direct the soul.”¹¹ Socrates as speechmaker is the *psychagōgue* who creates a beautiful environment conducive to recollection. This makes self-knowledge possible; it does not impart it. Directing the soul is not the same as moving the soul. Directing the soul is preparing a place for the soul to think for itself, and pointing out better (or worse) ways of evaluating beauty and goodness. The self-mover is fundamentally active, i.e., actively seeking the object of its love. As the beloved of Lysias, Phaedrus may not be in a place to understand this yet as it is so unfamiliar. Always aware of his audience, Socrates takes note and changes the rhetorical means used to elicit an understanding in his interlocutor. He does not, however, change the message.¹²

As Socrates explains the nature of a self-mover the intricacies of the definition seem lost on Phaedrus. Perhaps during the explanation of the soul as self-mover, Socrates noticed he was losing Phaedrus’s attention. As fascinating as the idea of the essence or substance of soul itself is for a more mature mind, for a young man the technical nature of the argument may have been too arcane. Perhaps it was the universal idea of the soul moving itself. This seems like an isolated activity, and is in stark contrast to the mythological description of the soul to come that is full of yearning, burning erotic attraction to a beautiful body.

¹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 261a and 271c.

¹² By rhetorical I mean the *psychagōgic* way Socrates leads Phaedrus’s soul to self-knowledge.

Socrates shifts his strategy, as he often does.¹³ Instead of continuing in the same way, he constructs a speech that will allow Phaedrus to be moved by the beauty *and* accuracy of the chariot myth, thereby pairing eros and philosophy in the hope that this beautiful environment can help Phaedrus move *himself* from a speech-lover to a wisdom-lover. This is one benefit of Plato's dialogue format, writes Gary Alan Scott:

Perhaps it was only by removing his dominant, authorial voice from the dramatic conversations that present his philosophy that Plato could best ensure that any disciples he engenders will fall in love with his vision of philosophy, and not with Plato the man.¹⁴

Although we are sitting in the pleasant shade of the *platon* tree, we should not fixate on the tree itself; rather we should embrace the learning process as we experience it in the dialogue format. Socrates as mythmaker both expresses love for Phaedrus's soul and wisdom in his speechmaking while simultaneously loving wisdom himself. At one point Socrates even exclaims, "If I don't know my Phaedrus I must be forgetting who I am myself—and neither is the case."¹⁵ Socrates possesses self-knowledge as well as knowledge of different souls—like Phaedrus the speech-lover—which makes him an

¹³ In *Republic*, Socrates similarly provides Glaucon and Adeimantus with the Sun analogy rather than speaking directly about the nature of the Good. He says, "I'm afraid that I won't be up to it and that I will disgrace myself and look ridiculous by trying. No, bless you, let's set aside what the good itself is for the time being. You see, even to arrive at my current beliefs about it seems beyond the range of our present discussion. But I am willing to tell you about what seems to be the offspring of the good and most like it, if that is agreeable to you, or otherwise to let the matter drop" (506d5–e5). In *Symposium*, Socrates asks Phaedrus's permission to "ask Agathon a few little questions, so that, once I have his agreement, I may speak on that basis" (199b8–10). When the dialectical exchange between him and Agathon ends, Agathon does not seem convinced, only sure that he cannot contradict him. Socrates then switches their roles. He now argues for Agathon's position, while his current position is told through Diotima: "I think it will be easiest for me to proceed the way Diotima did and tell you how she questioned me. You see, I had told her almost the same things Agathon told me just now: that Love is a great god and that he belongs to beautiful things. And she used the very same arguments against me that I used against Agathon; she showed how, according to my very own speech, Love is neither beautiful nor good" (201e).

¹⁴ Gary Alan Scott, *Socrates as Educator* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 178.

¹⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 228a5–6.

effective instigator of philosophical eros. As a passionate lover of wisdom and philosopher who is practiced in the art of love, Socrates also pursues Beauty itself with erotic vigor. Socrates' mind flies high in contemplation of Forms and as such is a self-mover. However, the soul cannot move itself until it has "wings," and it cannot fly high until it has a goal for ascent. Phaedrus's soul has the requisite desire (the first bloom of wings), but not the requisite aim (Forms) to fly high. Plato says that this person exhibits the fourth type of madness

when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true Beauty; then he takes wing and flutters in his eagerness to rise up, but is unable to do so; and he gazes aloft, like a bird, paying no attention to what is down below—and that is what brings on him the charge that he has gone mad.¹⁶

Phaedrus is more chicken than eagle when he meets Socrates in the city, but in the countryside his soul begins to soar up into the trees with the cicadas, the beings whose discourse never ends. Phaedrus begins the transformation from a lover of speeches to a lover of wisdom, and as such can begin to fly high contemplating the true nature of things.¹⁷

When Socrates began his exposition on the soul he said it was a self-mover. The soul as a whole is a self-mover, and each part within it also has the ability to move. The difference is that the bad horse has the ability to diminish the authority that the charioteer wields over the chariot as whole, and also diminish the capacity for the noble horse to limit itself. The soul cannot be a self-mover if the three parts are in discord. The dark

¹⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 249d5–9.

¹⁷ Whether or not he continues to do so after his time with Socrates is his choice, but for the time being he seems to ascend from speech-loving to wisdom-loving on his newly strengthened wings of recollection. It seems that Phaedrus is learning.

horse will move the chariot, but neither the dark horse in its wild trotting or the charioteer as he pulls the reins, will achieve their aim. If there are three aims, then it is improbable that any of the three aims will be met. Only when the three parts work together as a whole with a specific aim is it likely the chariot will move itself in order to reach the intended goal, i.e., it is a self-mover when all parts work together as a unified whole. This is the tragic state of the human soul. In its state of forgetfulness it does not know its aim or purpose, the various parts of the soul, or how to harmonize the soul parts correctly. The bad horse is goaded to act by external objects it desires, and in that sense, it distracts the self. Only when the bad horse is well trained can the soul possess true focus. So, the lover in his pursuit of the boy must learn to control himself. In doing so, he also liberates himself from the wild chaos of the dark horse distractions and channels that stream of appetitive desires to Beauty itself. Likewise, in order for the beloved to become a self-mover, he must liberate himself from remaining the passive object of love to begin loving Beauty itself actively.

Philosophers as teachers or “lovers” are able to reveal the best way “to turn the right kinds of souls toward philosophy,” although they do not have the absolute power to turn another person’s soul.¹⁸ Only one’s reason may lead one to pursue Beauty itself as the ultimate goal of life. Socrates hopes that Phaedrus will ascend gradually up the “ladder of love” from loving beautiful speeches to loving Beauty itself, but Phaedrus must act from his own soul. Socrates reveals the path toward ascent, and Phaedrus must

¹⁸ Werner 2012, 122.

choose to embark on the journey by engaging in stimulating philosophical discussions.¹⁹ By doing this Phaedrus will begin to move his soul closer to Beauty itself, which is what truly attracts Phaedrus when he is titillated by the *logos* of great Athenian speechmakers.²⁰ One could argue that it is Socrates pushing the soul toward the Forms, and that this is inconsistent with the claim that the self-motion is the essence of the soul. Socrates' goal is "to encourage or provoke a receptive soul to move itself toward a philosophical life."²¹ Socrates makes new possibilities for Phaedrus. He cannot force him to desire wisdom. "The myth attempts to achieve both," Werner states, "by stirring the individual to desire the philosophical life and by stirring him to engage in some philosophical thinking."²² As midwife, Socrates stands by the bedside, holding Phaedrus' hand, reminding him of the beauty of wisdom by asking provocative questions and constructing pointed pedagogical myths. All Phaedrus must do to pursue that beautiful wisdom is to think.²³

The ever-moving stream of eros makes self-motion possible; it courses through the soul alongside reason as it schemes on how to capture the object of desire. The self-mover is the "spring of motion" (245c9) and the "spring that feeds the stream is desire

¹⁹ Directly after his palinode, Socrates models for Phaedrus how to engage in a philosophical discussion. He introduces the topic of rhetoric by way of the cicada myth in order to evaluate the three previous speeches, and Phaedrus responds, "By all means, let's talk" (259d6), signaling his willingness to engage in dialectics with Socrates. The philosophical discussion ends with Socrates exclaiming, "Tell that, then, to your friend" (278e3) in reference to Lysias, for the seeming purpose of having Phaedrus continue discussing the ideas brought up with Socrates with others.

²⁰ However, it is possible that Phaedrus will continue to love the aesthetic value of speeches, and not use them as a platform for dialectically rigorous discussions. This exemplifies Nietzsche's extraordinary proclamation in the preface to his *The Birth of Tragedy*, that "art is the highest task and true metaphysical activity of this life" (Nietzsche, trans. Ronald Spiers, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 14). If Phaedrus continues to love speeches for speeches' sake, i.e., for the beauty within the speeches and not for Beauty itself, then he will fail to ascend.

²¹ Werner 2012, 128.

²² Werner 2012, 128.

²³ One can almost hear Socrates' version of lamaze at the crucial moment of self-reflection: "think, think, THINK!"

(*himeros*)” (255c1). Lower desires motivate the soul to descend to the physical realm, while higher desires motivate the soul to move itself towards the heights by learning more about the self and the desires present in the soul. The self ascends via self-reflective eros. Eros “waters the passages for the wings, starts the wings growing, and fills the soul of the loved one [beloved] with love in return” (255d1–2). It is the knowledge of one’s place on the ladder of love, the state of the wings of the soul, and the heightened vision gained while contemplating true reality that makes ascent possible.

When you want something you go after it. Ultimately, the soul is attracted to Beauty itself. The ultimate goal of self-motion is to move the soul away from bodily matters to spiritual ones and from caring for the body and worldly matters to caring for the soul. The idea of self-motion as a gradual understanding of the true object of eros is articulated in the ladder of love. The individual is moved by love of beautiful bodies, and as he moves up the ladder of love from the sensible realm to the intelligible realm, the self-mover gradually contemplates the true nature of beauty as the form of Beauty itself.²⁴ Diotima says that Eros is a *daimōn*, the offspring of *Penia* (lack) and *Poros* (resource). A *daimōn* is a self-moving messenger between human and divine, between ignorance and reason. A *daimōn* is always moving from one to another, desiring to fill the gap, and Socrates is the erotic messenger who continually reminds those around him of the true Beauty for which their souls long—the Beauty that always fills and never lacks.

The reading of self-motion as climbing the ladder of love is also substantiated by the charioteer analogy and the allegory of the cave from *Republic*. Like the charioteer soul that naturally desires to return to the source of all reality and partake of the divine

²⁴ Plato *Symposium* 211b–d.

banquet, so the soul is attracted to beauty. This erotic attraction allows movement to occur, even when the soul is embodied. Attraction to bodily beauty is the first rung on the ladder of love. To use the allegory of the cave, it is the first step out of the cave when the eyes are blinded by the sun and only gradually begin to see shadowy shapes with dimmed eyesight. The cave-dweller is the embodied soul, the soul that fell from the heavenly realm and is now trapped in the body. When the cave-dweller finally begins to see, his soul's vision is awakened for the first time. The dimmed cloudiness fades with use; he must learn to move from the shadows that he is used to perceiving to greater objects for his budding vision.

In the ladder of love, the young boy is learning the art of love, and the first rung is loving one beautiful body. This is the first step on a long climb upward. It reflects what he is accustomed to (loving individuals such as his family and friends), but he is experiencing a new kind of love for the first time. His soul is experiencing love for the first time, and it is both exhilarating and terrifying as his soul begins the process of adjusting to the attraction to Beauty itself.

To compare the journey of the cave-dweller from the *Republic's* allegory of the cave to the charioteer analogy, the soul that is newly embodied begins to experience divine madness in the form of erotic attraction as it begins to regrow its wings in the presence of the beloved. The soul must learn to harness his appetites with self-control. The process of the soul's transformation is related to the lover-beloved relationship because the "initially confused lover" whose soul is not accustomed to eros, who "gradually achieves greater degrees of self-awareness and self-mastery, uses the erotic

relationship to become a philosopher.”²⁵ An individual can use the lover-beloved relationship as a platform to becoming a philosopher. The person must eventually overcome the normal roles of the relationship and harness the attraction expressed by the lover towards his beloved, thereby transforming it into philosophical eros. The lover-beloved relationship is probably the youth’s first experience with eros, and represents the soul’s first taste of beauty. Socrates describes how the beloved responds to the love his lover expresses for him. The boy finds himself as the object of desire, and as such his soul begins to feel the pains of eros:

Think how a breeze or echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source; that’s how the stream of beauty goes back to the boy and sets him aflutter [...] He is seeing himself in the lover as if in a mirror.²⁶

The youth is “aflutter” with eros for the first time, and perhaps he begins to question what this feeling is, why his lover is attracted to him, and what is so attractive about himself. This is the beginning of self-knowledge as he places a mirror in front of his soul. The stream of newfound erotic desire is properly channeled through self-reflective dialectical discussions. Socrates says,

When someone’s appetites are strongly inclined in one direction, we surely know that they become more weakly inclined in others, just like a stream that has been partly diverted into another channel. [...] Then when a person’s desires flow toward learning and everything of that sort they will be concerned, I imagine, with the pleasures that the soul experiences just by itself, and will be indifferent to

²⁵ Werner 2012, 106.

²⁶ Plato *Symposium* 255c4–d6.

those that come through the body.²⁷

The newly transformed philosopher practices philosophical thinking through dialectical exchanges that help grow the wings of his own soul as well of those of his interlocutor. He understands that some youth may “happen to be swept that way [towards truth] by the current—[that is] the greatest good,” but it is not worth risking the souls of the capricious youth to let their desires be shaped by chance. A person who knows what she wants, why, and how she can get it is much more likely to enjoy the pursuit and not become wracked with frustration, disappointment, anger, and jealousy when the object of desire remains outside of her grasp. Thus, Socrates becomes mythmaker for the love of wisdom of as many souls as possible.²⁸

3.2 The Charioteer Analogy and the Ascent to Beauty Itself

Psychic health is related to the soul’s ascent insofar as the soul desires the Good. Psychic illness is the descent of the human soul away from the Good.²⁹ The question thus arises, what is the human good? What is the human function? What is the soul? Plato believes that seeking answers to these questions is in itself an activity that leads to the best possible life. Reflecting on the nature of the Good in dialectical exchange with others who are pursuing wisdom is the most beautiful environment because it is the most suitable to give birth to ideas. When the dialectic is erotically charged with a passion for

²⁷ Plato *Republic* 485d5–e1.

²⁸ Plato *Republic* 495b4–5.

²⁹ “Virtue, it seems, is a sort of health, a fine and good state of the soul,” declares Socrates, “whereas vice seems to be a shameful disease and weakness” (Plato *Republic* 444d11–e1). The desires of the tyrant are unlimited and all consuming, so much so that his life as the attempt to satisfy ever-expanding desires becomes self-destructive. The desire of the philosopher-king is to ensure that each part is performing its proper task to guarantee the happiness of the whole; the desire is a limited and unified goal. Desires correspond to abilities with proper training—lasting desire implies ability. If one loves wisdom, then one can become a philosopher.

Beauty, recollection is potent and the soul ascends; when the beloved is Beauty itself, the lover is able to give birth to true virtue with the aid of dialectics as midwife.³⁰ In *Phaedrus* Plato regards eros as necessary for the tripartite soul to ascend towards truth through participating in philosophical discussions. Ascent becomes possible when the soul loves. However, rationality must moderate eros in order for love to attain its goal. Applying the charioteer analogy, the chariot moves when the horses move, and the horses only move toward the charioteer's goal when they are properly trained. The soul consists of a tripartite structure in which each part has a specific role to play in the harmonious, healthy soul. *Phaedrus* provides an intricate mythology that explains the nature of the soul in its relationship to the Forms, as well as an explanation of how visible beauty sparks recollection of Beauty itself.³¹ The soul filled with eros directed toward the pursuit of Beauty itself through philosophical discussions moves itself toward its ultimate goal. The soul is not moved passively by an external object when it is attracted to Beauty itself; rather, attraction to beauty is how the soul moves itself as it reflects on and responds to the truth beyond discourse.

Because he cannot describe the soul as it actually is without providing a long and detailed exposition, Socrates explains to Phaedrus what it is *like* instead.³² The soul is likened to the “natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer.”³³ What moves the charioteer? His horse, of course! The pair of horses the gods have attached to their chariot are both noble and of noble blood, while everyone else has a mixture of

³⁰ Plato *Symposium* 209a1–d1.

³¹ Plato's account of the tripartite soul in *Republic* clarifies the idea of soul in the charioteer myth of *Phaedrus*. The *Republic* shows how the best soul is ruled by reason, where spirit functions as reason's auxiliary in order to control the more unruly appetites. Ultimately the appetites begin to crave those objects deemed worthy by reason and in doing so discover an abundance of pleasure.

³² Plato *Phaedrus* 246a.

³³ Plato *Phaedrus* 246a.

horses.³⁴ The mixture includes one beautiful (καλός) and good (ἀγαθός) horse, and one that is the opposite. Being fit with two opposite types of horse means that the act of driving the chariot is quite a struggle.

The use of the chariot analogy is quite crafty. A young man would probably be very interested in chariot races and would immediately feel a connection to this analogy.³⁵ Phaedrus made a reference to a legend earlier, so Socrates frames the analogy in terms of a “legendary” chariot procession to a heavenly banquet. Socrates uses familiar gods, as well:

Now Zeus, the great commander in heaven, drives his winged chariot first in the procession, looking after everything and putting all things in order. Following him is an army of gods and spirits arranged in eleven sections. [...] When they go to feast at the banquet they have a steep climb to the higher tier of the rim of heaven.³⁶

One can imagine how excited Phaedrus would be listening to Socrates’ speech—wide-eyed and expectantly waiting for the next part of the “story.” Keep in mind that the myth of the charioteer is a device that Socrates is using to explain what he means by self-motion, i.e., how the soul ascends. Instead of continuing to explain the first part of his speech, or explain the nature of the soul’s ascent in the same manner as the first part, Socrates gives Phaedrus a myth that can help him put the pieces together *for himself*. The

³⁴ When Socrates says that the gods have two horses of good stock, this can mean that the god’s chariot is attached to two horses representing perfectly trained spiritedness, or that the first horse represents perfectly trained spiritedness and the second horse perfectly trained appetite.

³⁵ One of my former students likened the ascent of the charioteer to the film *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* as they attempt to drive to a fast-food restaurant and must overcome many obstacles along the way. The charioteer analogy continues to speak to the youth today.

³⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 246e3–247b1.

myth is told to guide Phaedrus's soul to ascend by passionately reflecting on itself. So, what are the soul and its journey like?

The gods easily make the climb in their superior outfits, while the other chariots are beset with adversity. The other souls climb to the highest peak of heaven while “the heaviness of the bad horse drags its charioteer toward the earth. It weighs him down if he has failed to train well, and this failure causes the most extreme toil and struggle that a soul will face.”³⁷ As Socrates gives his speech, Phaedrus's mind is most likely filled with vivid images of chariots soaring into the heavens—the gods easy gliding upwards while the other charioteers are holding on for dear life. Phaedrus imagines the clattering of the axles, the slapping of reins on flesh, the tumult caused by the unruly horse as it neighs and kicks in the air. If Phaedrus used a potion on Socrates to charm him to leave the walls of Athens, then Socrates is repaying the favor with his discursive charms.³⁸ Socrates is not spouting pure rhetoric, however, nor is he providing all form with no content. He uses the vivid narrative format to his advantage as he continues this new approach to describe the nature of the soul.

Earlier in the palinode, Socrates defines the soul as the immortal self-mover. Next, he defines living things as a combination of mortal body and immortal soul.³⁹ This is reminiscent of Diotima's description of eros as *daimōn*, which is in between worlds like the embodied soul. A *daimōn* is a messenger between mortal and immortal realms. On the one hand, the mortal or physical realm represents ignorance. On the other hand, the immortal realm represents perfect possession of the true knowledge, i.e., wisdom. The

³⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 247b3–5.

³⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d.

³⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 246c. For another reference to *daimōn* in Plato's dialogues, see *Apology* 31c5–d5.

daimōn is the dialectical exchange between ignorance and wisdom that produces an active desire to bridge the two.⁴⁰ The *daimōn* is the self-mover who climbs the ladder of love; the soul is the *daimōn* whose wings are nourished by the Forms and fly higher to Beauty itself. *Aporia* is the *daimōnic* interlude that allows the soul to pause and gather its resources in order to pursue the utmost object of desire: Beauty itself.

The soul becomes embodied when it loses its wings and falls from heaven and lands in a body. Socrates is concerned about what causes the soul to shed its wings in the first place. He explains that

by their nature wings have the power to lift heavy things and raise them aloft where the gods all dwell, and so, more than anything that pertains to the body, they are akin to the divine, which has beauty, wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort. These nourish the soul's wings, which grow best in their presence; but foulness and ugliness make the wings shrink and disappear.⁴¹

The words used to describe the opposite of beauty, wisdom, and goodness have physical and psychic connotations of ugliness: deformed (αἰσχροῦ) and foulness. The wings become deformed when the soul is surrounded by what is antithetical to its nature, ugliness (κακῶ). The lack of beauty, wisdom, and goodness cause the soul's wings to disappear, or to "forget" the soul's own nature, thereby destroying the wings that carry it aloft. The soul cannot fly high without contemplating true reality. Also significant is that the word for disappear (διόλλυται) means "to destroy utterly, bring to naught, blot out

⁴⁰ Plato *Symposium* 202d10–203b1.

⁴¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 246d5–e3.

of one's mind, to forget."⁴² To forget is to mar the soul by diminishing its participation in beauty, wisdom, and goodness. The soul's forgetfulness diminishes and deforms it, leading to descent and ultimate embodiment. Embodiment thwarts the chariot's goal to ascend to the rim of heaven to behold the Forms.

The description of the soul's descent is similar to Diotima's speech on the nature of the soul's procreative function. If the nature of eros is "wanting to possess the good forever," and lovers pursue this end with "eagerness and zeal," then what is the precise activity of pursuing the object of love?⁴³ Diotima answers that it is "giving birth in beauty, whether in body or in soul."⁴⁴ A person can give birth to another person, or give birth to great deeds or works of art, but most importantly a lover of wisdom is able to give birth to true virtue. Each type of procreative act shares in the prerequisite of a beautiful environment to give birth in; birth can never occur in ugliness.⁴⁵ Exposure to beauty provokes self-reflection concerning one's attraction to beauty, while ugliness repels the soul from the object and diminishes eros as the soul "frowns and draws back in pain."⁴⁶

Because "beauty is in harmony with the divine," Socrates explains that what eros truly longs for is the release that comes with "reproduction and birth in beauty."⁴⁷ Beauty leads to recollection, while ugliness leads to forgetting. The highest function of love is to participate in immortality by giving birth to beautiful ideas that create beautiful

⁴² Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

⁴³ Plato *Symposium* 206a10–b3.

⁴⁴ Plato *Symposium* 206b7–8.

⁴⁵ Plato *Symposium* 206c1–2.

⁴⁶ Plato *Symposium* 206d5.

⁴⁷ Plato *Symposium* 206d1 and 206e5, respectively.

environments for others that in turn inspire recollection, and so on forever.⁴⁸

Reproduction is immortal because it is the act of “leaving behind a young new one in place of the old,” much like the dialectical method recollects immortal ideas via recollection and is able to replace old opinions with “newer” ideas.⁴⁹ The ideas themselves are not new *per se*, but the recollection of ideas places them in the foreground of thought, which makes our dimmer images of the old idea into a newer, clearer, and more rationally justified idea. Diotima says, “Reproduction always leaves behind a new young one in place of the old.”⁵⁰ The older, decrepit image is replaced by a vibrant and new idea that is brimming with truth. This illuminates why Socrates says he “honors the rites of Love and practices them with special diligence” based on the lessons he learned from Diotima. His statement mirrors the prayer he and Phaedrus recite to devote their lives to love through philosophical discussions.⁵¹ Socrates’ life is dedicated to transforming the Athenians’ untamed eros into philosophical eros so that they too may move themselves upwards towards Beauty itself by engaging in dialectics.

Returning to the mythology of *Phaedrus*, the soul at its peak performance “flies high” and “patrols all of heaven.”⁵² The soul’s wings flourish in this divine realm performing the highest activity because the wings are “akin” to the divine, that is, they are comfortable in the presence of like things. This word “akin” refers back to the nature of the horses. The noble horse is good and beautiful and originates from good and beautiful stock. It is good because it received goodness from its source, the Good. The

⁴⁸ Plato *Symposium* 206e5–207a5.

⁴⁹ Plato *Symposium* 207d3–4.

⁵⁰ Plato *Symposium* 207d3.

⁵¹ Plato *Symposium* 212b5–6.

⁵² Plato *Phaedrus* 246b.

soul itself is related to the divine because Beauty Itself is the source of the soul, attracting the soul above all else and allowing the wings to grow stronger in the presence of divinity. The nature of the soul is that it is composed of three parts that must work together in harmony if it is to perform its “highest” function of feasting on Forms by way of ascent. Each part has a specific function—the charioteer leads and the horses obey. When each part performs its function well, the whole chariot can move as one onward and upward toward its goal. The more unified the soul, the more effective it will be in reaching its ultimate aim.⁵³ The chariot is composed of many parts, but only when the soul orders himself can he achieve any meaningful goals. When the soul parts are each allowed to follow their individual paths as they see fit, only chaos and disorder ensues as the chariot is unable to follow a single path.⁵⁴

The charioteer who trains her noble horse to obey her and act as her helper in taming the wild horse, and succeeds in this endeavor, is “lifted up by justice to a place in

⁵³ In *Republic*, Socrates explains how one can consider the multifaceted soul as a unified whole: Justice [in the soul means] that he does not allow the elements in him each to [...] meddle with one another. Instead, he regulates well what is really his own, rules himself, puts himself in order, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three elements together, just as if they were literally the three defining notes of an octave—lowest, highest, and middle—as well as any others that may be in between. He binds together all of these, and, from having been many, becomes entirely one, temperate and harmonious. Then and only then should he turn to action [...] In all areas, he considers and calls ‘just’ and ‘fine’ what preserves the inner harmony, and wisdom the knowledge that oversees such action; and he considers and calls unjust any action that destroys this harmony, and ignorance the belief that oversees it (443c–e1).

⁵⁴ The city-soul analogy in *Republic* teaches that the “rationally calculating element rules” as reason in the soul and the philosopher-king in the city because “it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul; and the spirited kind obeys it and is its ally” in keeping the appetites in the soul and the workers in the city as moderate as possible (Plato *Republic* 441e2–5). The appetites are described as the irrational part of the soul that “feels passion, hungers, thirsts, and is stirred by other appetites [and is] friend to certain ways of being filled and certain pleasures” (Plato *Republic* 439a5–8). Knowing the nature of each element, the soul can continue to ensure that each part is doing its own job. Desire in the soul is not relegated to the appetitive function; rather there are appropriate desires for each part of the soul, as well as for different psychological models.

heaven.”⁵⁵ If the soul finds a wrench in its spoke and consequently forgets the Forms, she will fall to earth and be incarnated as a philosopher. The charioteer who is unable to rule over her horses will descend into chaos and never nourish herself on the feast of Forms, falling to inferior incarnations, including king or commander, statesman, physical trainer or doctor, prophet or priest, poet, farmer, sophist, and lastly tyrant.⁵⁶ Socrates describes the different types of first incarnations of the soul in descending order, starting with the philosopher, whose soul has “seen the most.”⁵⁷ Those who live just lives will “change to a better fate” in the next round of reincarnation, and those “who have led theirs with injustice, to a worse one.”⁵⁸

The goal of the chariot’s ascent in the procession is to feast on the banquet that lies beyond heaven; the feast is for the soul and is explained in terms of sight. The souls that make it to the top sit on the ridge of heaven and “gaze upon what is outside heaven.”⁵⁹ Socrates dares to describe what no one else has attempted: the truth (ἀληθές). That which is beyond heaven is “without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to

⁵⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 249a8. The description of the appetitive element of the soul in *Republic* is similar to the description of the dark horse of the charioteer analogy in *Phaedrus*. Both the appetitive element and the dark, wild horse have the ability to throw the whole soul off its course. In *Republic*, Socrates continues to explain that the other two elements—reason and spiritedness—must be trained to “truly learn their own jobs and be educated” in order to harness the power of the appetitive element, which is “the largest one in each person’s soul, and by nature, the most insatiable for money” Plato *Republic* 442a5–b2.

⁵⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 248d–248e5. In *Republic*, Plato explains that if all of the wage-earners in a city, with all of their various likes and dislikes, were to indulge in their lower pleasures in an extreme way, then the city would descend into vice. The philosopher-king acts as the ruling element that prescribes the best laws to guide the city, and the auxiliaries act with courage to ensure the workers—the largest part of the city—follow the command of the wise leader and live in moderation. The philosopher-king is able to understand the city as one entity made of many parts, working together for the unified goal of justice; he must order the city so that each person is able to perform his or her function well, and not to try to perform the job of any other element in the city (Plato *Republic* 428c10–434c10).

⁵⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 248d2.

⁵⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 248e3–5.

⁵⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 247c1.

intelligence, the soul's steersman."⁶⁰ These Forms are the source of all reality and true knowledge:

Now a god's mind is nourished by intelligence and pure knowledge, as is the mind of any soul that is concerned to take in what is appropriate to it, and so it is delighted at last to be seeing what is real and watching what is true, feeding on all this and feeling wonderful, until the circular motion brings it around to where it started. On the way around it has a view of Justice as it is; it has a view of Self-control; it has a view of Knowledge—not the knowledge that is close to change, that becomes different as it knows different things which we consider real down here. No, it is the knowledge of what really is what it is. And when the soul has seen all the things that are as they are and feasted upon them, it sinks back inside heaven and goes home.⁶¹

The gods float around the ridge of heaven for the entire circuit. Their souls triumphantly feast on the Forms until sated. The other souls, however, have only a fleeting glimpse of reality—at best. The souls that have trained their horses the best, who have the most control over their chariot, and are able to work as one harmonious whole during the steep climb are able to peep at the Forms for a short time until either the bad horse pulls away or another chariot crashes into it. The scene is chaotic: horses are being trampled and trampling others, wings are broken, feathers are flying everywhere, and the whole scene is “noisy, very sweaty, and disorderly.”⁶² Most poor souls, after facing the steep climb and clamor, go away without feasting on the Forms and “when they have gone they will

⁶⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 247c5–8.

⁶¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 247c8–e4.

⁶² Plato *Phaedrus* 248b2.

depend on what they think is nourishment—their own opinions.”⁶³ This is the beginning of the end; descent is imminent when the soul’s wings lack the proper nourishment necessary to survive. The soul fed on opinion will inevitably fall to earth.

Each human consists of a body paired with a fallen soul, and each person is born with a certain type of soul that determines his or her predispositions, desires, and station in life. The hierarchy of reincarnation is determined by the soul’s “past life” in heaven. Did the well-trained soul gaze at the Forms and see the most, sating itself on true knowledge, but in a moment of weakness deformed itself with forgetfulness? This soul would fall to earth by necessity, and the man who would inherit this soul would become a philosopher. Socrates explains three scenarios for the souls that are not divine. He says,

as for the [mortal] souls, one that follows a god most closely, making itself most like that god, raises the head of its charioteer up to the place outside and is carried around in the circular motion with the others. Although distracted by the horses, this soul does have a view of Reality, just barely.⁶⁴

This is the soul with the most exposure to the Forms, becoming a philosopher once embodied. The second scenario is that, “another soul rises at one time and falls at another, and because its horses pull it violently in different directions, it sees some real things and misses others.”⁶⁵ The third and worst scenario for the remaining mortal souls is that they are all “eagerly straining to keep up, but are unable to rise; they are carried around below the surface, trampling and striking one another as each tries to get ahead of the others.” Later on, Socrates explains that only souls that had a view of the Forms

⁶³ Plato *Phaedrus* 248b5.

⁶⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 248a1–4.

⁶⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 248a5–6.

become humans.⁶⁶ The third scenario seems to explain animal souls only, while the first two designate different types of human souls. Those mortal charioteers who follow closely their god—one of eleven—leading the processional can avoid the chaos lurking under the surface, which damages the charioteers as they struggle to peep at the Forms above:

The result is terribly noisy, very sweaty, and disorderly. Many souls are crippled by the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their plumage. After so much trouble, they all leave without having seen reality, uninitiated, and when they have gone they will depend on what they think is nourishment—their own opinions.⁶⁷

As far as the philosopher, Socrates confirms that the “soul that has seen the most will be planted in the seed of a man who will become a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or who will be cultivated in the arts and prone to erotic love.”⁶⁸ Here Socrates foreshadows the connection between erotic love and philosophy. Nussbaum explains that lovers, “whether consciously or not,” respond the most powerfully to a “body illuminated by a soul of a certain type, containing the divine. Love’s initial shiver is a shiver of awe (251a).”⁶⁹ A philosopher is a lover of wisdom, beauty, justice and goodness. As such, the philosopher is passionately attracted to people who share these pursuits. But even the speech-lovers are attracted to the body that contains a soul with strengthening wings. What else could

⁶⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 248d2–4; 249b5–c; 249e3–5.

⁶⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 248b1–5. The noisy rabble reflects the turmoil of the lower desires, and perhaps sexual relations in all of its sweaty disorder.

⁶⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 248d.

⁶⁹ Nussbaum 2002, 71.

Alcibiades have meant by the god within Socrates?⁷⁰ Alcibiades was attracted to the immortal truth within Socrates, who was closer to reaching immortality through “reproduction and birth in beauty” as his soul became akin to the divine Forms.⁷¹

Just like the embodied soul that only caught a glimpse of the Forms in heaven and who will now struggle in life to remember it, the teacher or lover who does not love wisdom will struggle to teach a pupil or beloved how to ascend properly. This teacher, similar to a sophist, is unable to instill a passion for the correct goal of ascent: the Forms. The sophist is an inferior teacher because his soul is filled with images of truth and a desire for lower pleasures such as money and fame. The first step of the lover-beloved relationship is to prepare one’s own soul for ascent, while a subsequent step is trying to inspire it in another soul. The lover of wisdom is a passionate soul—indeed, so passionate that she often inspires like passion in others. Therefore, a philosopher is both a better lover and a better teacher than a sophist.

Was the soul’s chariot always filled with strife and disorder, only with great toil reaching the rim of heaven? If so, then the embodied soul would be an inferior reincarnation and live as a poet, sophist, or, at worst, a tyrant.⁷² These types of people have souls that did not have a sustained vision of true Beauty but only a glimpse; therefore, they have little chance of finding it in the embodied state. Their souls continue to feed on opinion and have little chance of finding their place in the heavenly procession

⁷⁰ Plato *Symposium* 216e6–217a1.

⁷¹ Plato *Symposium* 206e5.

⁷² Plato *Phaedrus* 248e.

after ten millennia.⁷³ Overall, just souls will be rewarded, and those who did not live in justice will be punished by a worse incarnation.

The soul flourishes when eros is paired with dialectical reasoning. The soul is infused with recollected Forms through an activity that produces and gives birth to more beauty. This is why education through dialectic is crucial. Without dialectical training, the soul flounders with its multifaceted desires. The bodily desires crowd out desire for honor and intellectual desires; there is a noisy rabble in the soul. How is one to quiet the crowd? A good education leading to recollection will reinforce the soul's spirit to reward intellectual rule and discourage appetitive usurpation. However, this is the "crowd" of the soul. How does one quiet the external crowd tempting one with similarly multifaceted pleasures?

Plato understood the soul as a complex structure composed of different desires compelling it to different goals. Amongst the noisy rabble, the soul's reason has the ability to make sense of the chaotic desires within itself, and to move the soul toward the unified goal of pursuing Beauty itself. To help with this idea, Socrates provides Phaedrus with the vivid image of the charioteer with his well-trained horses ascending toward the divine banquet. Just as the mortal soul must compete with other charioteers during the steep ascent, the self-mover does not exist in a vacuum; she exists in a world filled with other living, breathing, struggling self-movers. The role of the lover is to help his beloved's soul prepare for the journey of the soul after death. If the lover and beloved pursue Beauty itself together, they both have a better chance at reaching their mutual goal

⁷³ Plato *Phaedrus* 248e5–249a2: "No soul returns to the place from which it came for ten thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for the soul of a man who practices philosophy without guile or who loves boys philosophically."

at the divine banquet. The lover and beloved bask in philosophical eros in order to help each other pursue Beauty itself, thus leading them to live the best life possible.

Philosophical eros transforms conventional longing into an even more frenzied passion for knowledge of the Forms, which climaxes during contemplation of Beauty itself, allowing the soul to give birth to true virtue. Post-climax, the soul is transformed; it is now a wise soul with an altruistic bent. Just as the philosopher returns to the cave, so the educator returns to the students. And the liberated student turns educator to all she meets and the role is reversed: student becomes educator.

3.3 Why Dine Alone? The Lover and Beloved are Turned On

The way Socrates plays with the roles of lover and beloved by reversing and confusing the boundaries between the two is important in his interpretation of self-motion. How similar are the roles of mythmaker and matchmaker? Both the ladder of love and charioteer analogies describe ascent provoked by eros. The *erastēs-erōmenos* (lover-beloved) relationship draws a distinction between the subject who actively participates in eros and the one who serves as the object of erotic attraction. The beloved, the source of attraction, moves the individual lover to act, sometimes impulsively, to satisfy the overwhelming experience of erotic attraction. Kenneth Dover explains that

the Greeks did not think of a homosexual love-affair as involving mutual desire on the part of two males of the same age-group. The more mature male, motivated by eros, ‘pursues’, and the younger, if he ‘yields’, as motivated by affection, gratitude and admiration. The older male is the ἐραστής (‘lover’), the younger is his ἐρώμενος (passive participle of ἐρᾶν) or his παιδικά (a neutral plural, ‘things to

do with boys', designating a person.)⁷⁴

Upon erotic awakening (physical eros) one understands the beloved as one beautiful body, while upon spiritual awakening (philosophical eros) one understands the beloved as merely an image of Beauty itself, a particular participating in a universal form. The gradual move from bodily attachment to contemplation of beauty is not an easy one, as Socrates vividly describes the ordeal of the charioteer attempting to restrain the dark appetitive horse. Much like the distinction between philosophical and intuitive recollection, the difference between the traditional role of lover and beloved is in terms of active and passive. The beloved as passive may intuitively recollect the Forms, but the knowledge remains latent or unverified. The active lover self-consciously recollects the Forms. Socrates must convince Phaedrus that to love as a philosopher is divine, and then Phaedrus must choose to “devote his life to love through philosophical discussions” or continue to stay at the level of speech-lover.⁷⁵

Beauty is one of the most compelling ways to describe our fascination, attraction, and obsession with the object of desire. Socrates plays on the universal experience of sexual attraction to a beautiful body in order to point to the much greater erotic attraction to an object that does not grow old and decay, let alone express fickle emotions. Socrates uses the interplay between lover and beloved to promote self-reflection in Phaedrus. An active lover is someone who is overcome with divine madness for the beautiful beloved. The beauty of the beloved draws him into a frenzied love. The beloved passively experiences the advances of the lover as he also passively learns the virtues of his lover-

⁷⁴ Dover, Plato, *Symposium*, 4. (Cf. Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 1966, 31–42.)

⁷⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 257b5.

educator.⁷⁶

Does the soul move itself to climb the ladder of love, or is the soul moved by love? In the latter case, the lover seems passively controlled by his attraction to beauty. However, we do not normally think of attraction in the same way as compulsion. I am attracted to the smell of brisket in a smoker; I enjoy eating barbecue and it reminds me of my childhood. Although I enjoy the smell and the taste of brisket, I have rationally chosen not to partake in the consumption of flesh.⁷⁷ The smell moves my appetite and I begin to salivate; perhaps my stomach emits a growl; but I choose whether or not to eat the brisket—to move from smell to hand to mouth. In the presence of beauty, the individual may experience a physical response similar to the salivating and stomach growls in the above example—Plato refers to it as “aches and tingles.”⁷⁸ Then, she can choose to act on her attraction or not. No matter what the response to beauty is, it does not force her to move from loving the beautiful body to loving Beauty itself.⁷⁹ The move from loving particular beauties to loving universal beauty takes far greater time and effort than any meal, but the nourishment the divine banquet provides the soul is also greater. The move from sensible to intelligible beauty comes from the soul recollecting the form of Beauty itself.

An individual’s transformation, indebted to the erotic experience, explains why some people are able to continue to climb the ladder of love to Beauty itself, whereas some remain at the first rung of the ladder. The philosopher as the lover of wisdom is the continual climber, while the sophist, as the lover of the appearance of wisdom, remains

⁷⁶ See Gorgias’s *Encomium of Helen* for a detailed description of love as passive.

⁷⁷ I practice vegetarianism for philosophical reasons, which I will not delve into here.

⁷⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 251c5.

⁷⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 254a.

on the level of experiencing the image of beauty. Philosophical eros uncovers the spiritual nature of the experience we call love. Socrates points to the Forms as true knowledge that never changes, and is therefore universal. The universal experience of erotic attraction points to a universal object of desire: Beauty itself. Of course, the philosopher aids the novice's transformation by constructing a beautiful environment that helps the youth ask questions and seek the answers through dialectical exchange. Without some direction, though, it seems likely that the transformation would occur only in a few by chance.

The transition from being “turned on” to beauty through erotic attraction and associating the attraction to a greater beauty is the crux. Love is necessary, but not sufficient to propel our soul towards the Forms. If the mind cannot recollect true Beauty or at least feel the attraction to particular beauties other than those of the physical realm, the soul will not ascend. In order for the soul to partake in other divine feasts, such as Justice, Moderation, and the Good, the soul must first be attracted to them (intuitive recollection), then next recognize the object of attraction and desire in order to make the journey to them (philosophical recollection). The transition from intuitive to philosophical reflection occurs in the palinode when

the initially confused lover gradually achieves greater degrees of self-awareness and self-mastery, and uses the erotic relationship to become a philosopher. But the lover *becomes* a philosopher through his own activity [...] For Plato it is through dialectic—and not simply by reading myth or receiving images of beauty—that one ultimately takes the leap.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Werner 2012, 106.

Attraction to beauty is the first step on the ladder of love; turning from beautiful objects to Beauty itself promotes the soul's ascent. By its nature, the soul desires to ascend because of its latent familiarity with true reality. The wings of the soul by nature desire to fly up to return to its source. Socrates uses his discursive charms to spur self-knowledge through self-awareness.

The goal of ascent is not solely to attain Beauty itself for the sake of your own soul; rather, it is to improve the souls of others as well. If only the lover is benefited from divine madness, then is this madness truly divine? Is the lover using the love for the boy as a means to an end, stepping on him as if he were a rung on the ladder of love? Is the philosopher selflessly abandoning his own pursuit of the Forms to inspire the honor-lovers and money-lovers of his community? Philosophical eros rests on the relationship between lover and beloved, teacher and student, philosopher and sophist. Socrates is a mythmaker because he is a philosopher—a lover of *wisdom*. Loving wisdom passionately often inspires a desire for others to share in the divine banquet of Forms. To dine alone is not as rewarding as to dine with enthusiastic friends.⁸¹ Although the tumult of divine procession, forcing some charioteers off the path to the Forms, could prove otherwise, Plato believes that the soul is more likely to ascend with a correct training and in the company of those seeking ascent for themselves. Imagine what the chariot procession would look like if each charioteer participating had trained his horses well. No longer are the stragglers on their own in pursuit of the divine banquet—a do or die quest if you understand that the wings of the soul must be nourished, otherwise they wither and the soul descends to earth. If the soul never peeps at the Forms, then the soul cannot descend

⁸¹ Socrates asserts that the best way to do philosophy is with friends. See Plato *Gorgias* 486e, *Charmides* 166d, and *Cratylus* 391a.

into human form, rather than that of an animal.⁸² This example shows the practical side of educating others in that it eases one's ascent, but Plato also reveals that Socrates was not content to remain in solitary contemplation of the Forms, but sought the company of others in order to aid their ascent.

Another example where Plato shows that dining on the Forms is better with others is in *Symposium*. To set the stage for the series of speeches on eros in *Symposium*, Apollodorus relays Aristodemus's account of Socrates' behavior on the journey to Agathon's symposium. Socrates was freshly bathed and donned his "fancy sandals." He tarried the whole way, urging Aristodemus to continue on without him.⁸³ When Aristodemus arrives at Agathon's party uninvited, he explains that he came with Socrates, who is lost in thought outside. When Agathon's slaves attempt to retrieve him, Socrates does not respond to their calls or even seem to hear their voices. When Agathon insists that the slave bring him in, Aristodemus says,

No, no, leave him alone. It is one of his habits. Every now and then he just goes off like that and stands motionless, wherever he happens to be. I'm sure he'll come in soon, so don't disturb him; let him be.⁸⁴

Presumably engaging in an internal dialectic, Socrates "ascends that ascent" and reaches enlightenment under Agathon's neighbor's porch.⁸⁵ Perhaps he was contemplating Beauty itself as preparation for his speech. When he enters, Agathon requests that Socrates sit next to him so that he can soak up the newly attained wisdom because "it is

⁸² Plato *Phaedrus* 249b5.

⁸³ Plato *Symposium* 174a4, 174d–e1.

⁸⁴ Plato *Symposium* 175a10–b3.

⁸⁵ Plato *Republic* 519c10.

clear that *you've* seen the light. If you hadn't, you'd still be standing there."⁸⁶ If Socrates was truly communing with the Forms, why stop to attend a party?⁸⁷ The people present at Agathon's party were not necessarily "enthusiastic" philosophers, but they all had something to say about love. While I am not claiming that the symposiasts ascend to the Forms through sharing their inferior speeches, there is a sense that they are pursuing knowledge of Beauty itself, albeit unaware, through praising eros. Socrates understands that the symposiasts are not "feasting on Forms" in the same way that he does immediately before entering the party, as he stares off into space on the porch unaware of the sensible world around him. The speeches are a start, and the way that Socrates implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) refutes the other speeches shows that Socrates is providing the learning environment necessary to ascend out of opinions on love to wisdom on the nature of eros. He elicits a desire to learn about love by recollecting Beauty. Socrates cares not only for his soul, but all other souls that perhaps will serve as dialectical sparring partners that aid in ascent.

The crux of Plato's position on the appetitive dark horse, no matter what the object of desire, is self-mastery. Nussbaum argues that eros is wrapped up in virtues that improve one's life, but just as importantly the lives of others, because "what one does inevitably has a very profound effect on the being of the other."⁸⁸ I will use the charioteer analogy to illuminate this claim. The charioteer must maintain control of the dark horse of appetite and the white horse of spiritedness in order to work as a harmonious whole and move toward the goal. The mortal chariots that follow the procession of Zeus move

⁸⁶ Plato *Symposium* 175c6–d2.

⁸⁷ A similar question could be asked of the liberated cave-dweller in the allegory of the cave: Why descend into the darkness?

⁸⁸ Nussbaum 2002, 57–58.

more harmoniously than the other mortal chariots that follow different gods in the procession to the heavenly banquet.⁸⁹ In the charioteer myth the procession to the Forms is fraught with chaos and violence because all charioteers cannot ascend harmoniously.⁹⁰ If the chariot does not reach the divine banquet of the Forms, it will eventually fall to earth and be trapped in a body as its soul. Socrates continues to explain the ascent of the lovers of wisdom together within the charioteer myth:

Now if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds [the noble horse and charioteer contra the bad horse], which lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding. They are modest and fully in control of themselves now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into the soul [the bad horse] and set free the part that gave it virtue. After death, when they have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first three rounds in these, the true Olympic Contests. There is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man.⁹¹

Applying the myth to city life, to have not just one philosopher to share a life with, but a city ruled by lovers of wisdom, would provide the best environment to remember the Forms devoured at the soul's divine banquet.⁹² To pursue wisdom with other wisdom-lovers is beneficial because their lives "are bright and happy as they travel together, and

⁸⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 246e3–5; 250b6.

⁹⁰ Socrates explains, "on this slope the god's chariots move easily, since they are balanced and well under control, but the other chariots can barely make it" (*Phaedrus* 247b2–3).

⁹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 256a–256b5.

⁹² To have a city of lovers sounds suspiciously similar to Phaedrus's speech in Plato's *Symposium*. Phaedrus believes that having an army of lovers and their beloveds would ensure courageous acts during battle (179e–179a). Historically, this proved a disastrous failure for Thebes.

thanks to their love they will grow wings together when the time comes.”⁹³ Socrates also contrasts the ascent of the soul for the lovers of wisdom and the lovers of speeches. The former have developed wings through philosophical discussions throughout a lifetime. Although the sophists have loved passionately, they fail to develop the wings necessary to fly towards the divine banquet.

Plato couches *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* within the context of the lover-beloved relationship because discussing love draws an audience and illuminates the desires that transform the soul. The “method in the madness” of these dialogues is in part to illustrate the power love has in shaping the soul. First, *Phaedrus* provides an example of the traditional lover-beloved relationship as expressed by Phaedrus and Lysias. In *Symposium*, each of the symposiasts couches their eulogies on eros within the context of the lover-beloved relationship, albeit from their own various positions.⁹⁴ Second, *Phaedrus* is set in the midst of the playful and flirtatious relationship between the young Phaedrus and an older Socrates, who inverts the cultural expectations of the lover-beloved relationship: Phaedrus demands speeches from Socrates, and Socrates cannot resist his charms. In *Symposium*, Phaedrus is at it again. He initiates the turn from drinking to telling speeches, and the mood is celebratory with a heavy dose of sarcasm and banter. Third, both *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* are concerned with the nature of erotic love and the quality of the education a sophist provides his beloved through rhetoric. This is in stark contrast to the quality of education a philosopher provides through the dialectical method.

⁹³ Plato *Phaedrus* 256d–e.

⁹⁴ Aristophanes’ speech is the only one that does not explicitly reference the erotic and educational relationship between an older, established Athenian and a young, aristocratic boy. What he does provide is an aetiological interpretation of love for the same sex (*Symposium* 189d5–192c1).

As a lover of wisdom, Socrates is able to see the benefits of pursuing Beauty itself and wants to share this pursuit with others—a benefit to himself and others, although not everyone in Athens sees it this way. The “method” is mythmaking for the purpose of conjuring philosophical eros from traditional eros.⁹⁵ One could interpret the “madness” as the myths that Socrates creates, or the divine madness that ensues. Christopher Long describes the divine madness of the *Phaedrus* as “eros that playfully awakens human souls to the life of philosophy and touches on something of the truth.”⁹⁶ Socrates loves Phaedrus because Socrates is in love with Beauty itself. At the end of the palinode Socrates concludes that

these are the rewards you will have from a lover’s friendship, my boy, and they are as great as divine gifts should be. A non-lover’s companionship, on the other hand, is diluted with human self-control; all it pays are cheap, human dividends, and though the slavish attitude it engenders in a friend’s soul is widely praised as virtue, it tosses the soul around for nine thousand years on the earth and leads it, mindless, beneath it.⁹⁷

Not straying from the charioteer myth, Socrates conveys it in terms Phaedrus will understand: a lover (philosopher) will aid your soul’s ascent, while a non-lover (sophist) will lead you to material success but spiritual decline. Socrates is attempting to transform the traditional concept of education within the context of the lover-beloved relationship.

⁹⁵ The distinction I make between philosophical eros and traditional eros is similar to Pausanias’ speech in *Symposium*. In his speech, he says there are two types of love: Heavenly Aphrodite and Common Aphrodite, and they have different lineages (180d). Common Aphrodite is “vulgar” because she is descended from both male and female gods. This love is attached to the “body more than the soul” and all the lovers care about is sex (181b). Heavenly Aphrodite is descended from only males, is attracted to males only, as well as intelligence and strength, preferring adults (181c).

⁹⁶ Long 2007, 174.

⁹⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 256e–257a.

He claims that instead of lovers focusing on the selfish gain of their elite class, they should focus on the selfless good of as many as possible.

Philosophical eros is an altruistic endeavor to try to win over the novice in order that she can win over herself. Nussbaum argues that Socrates captures the beauty of eros as it opens the soul “with its sting of madness and his liquids flowing in as though an irrigation trench—connecting the surrender, plausibly and powerfully, with the goods of generosity and altruism.”⁹⁸ The process is dangerous, both for the altruistic philosopher who finds himself on trial for corrupting the youth, as Socrates was, and for the novice who can potentially misconstrue the object of the “sting of madness” for either an individual or a cultural norm, as Alcibiades did for Socrates and political power. The dialectical method itself parallels the way eros is best expressed. A person in love should not center his entire existence on his beloved. Neither the lover nor the beloved should serve as the sun that generates a gravitational force that pulls our being into orbit. Rather, Socrates’ ladder of love serves as a better model of loving relationships: they should point to Beauty itself and not rest content with one of its images.

The allegory of the cave also contains an altruistic message.⁹⁹ The liberated and enlightened cave dweller returns to the dark recesses in order to free those ignorant of their own prison. If what moves the self is the erotic attraction toward divine truths, then Socrates can play with those erotic impulses to start the process of recollection of what ultimately attracts him. With all his mythmaking skills, Socrates still does not have the magical power to deposit eros into the soul. He cannot penetrate his beloved’s soul and

⁹⁸ Nussbaum 2002, 86.

⁹⁹ Plato *Republic* 514a–521a.

inject it with a pure stream of wisdom.¹⁰⁰ The lover-beloved relationship rests on the assumption that wisdom is stamped onto the soul of the passive youth, that virtue is attained when the young man mimics his lover. All the beloved has to do, according to this model, is passively await his lover's penetration. Socrates directly combats this in *Republic* when he states, "education is not what some people boastfully profess it to be. They say they can pretty much *put knowledge* into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes."¹⁰¹

Eros is formative in shaping the life of an individual because the object of one's desires changes the trajectory of his soul's motion. What do you desire more than anything? Your soul will unite in order to chase after that goal more resourcefully.¹⁰² Depending somewhat on the environment that someone is raised in and accustomed to, her desires may or may not have a natural inclination to investigate the nature of beauty. Although people express erotic attraction in some form or fashion, not all rise above the bodily realm to the intelligible. Not even the most powerful of Socrates' discursive charms can force the disinclined soul to move itself to think philosophically. That does not mean Socrates will not try.

¹⁰⁰ It seems that this is what Alcibiades wants when he tricks Socrates into spending the night with him (Plato *Symposium* 217c–217e).

¹⁰¹ Plato *Republic* 518b–c. Italics mine.

¹⁰² *Penia* (lack) unites or "copulates" with *Poros* (resource) in order to transform lack into possession. The offspring of the union is *Eros*, the *daimōn* that constantly moves between lack and resource. Eros fuels the dialectic in passionate pursuit of truth (Plato *Symposium* 203b–c).

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING TO LOVE BY LOVING TO LEARN:
ROLE REVERSAL AS *PHARMAKON* PROMOTING
SELF-MOTION

Phaedrus, my friend! Where have you been?
Where are you going?

— Plato *Phaedrus* 227a1–2

The first line of Plato's *Phaedrus* is an amiable question Socrates poses to a young man he meets on a country path outside the walls of Athens.¹ The question indicates that Phaedrus should reflect on his past and the future in order to aim at the best life. It also implies a bi-directionality that permeates the dialogue. Will Phaedrus choose to continue on the past path as a speech-lover, never ascending to higher desires? Or will he choose to transform himself into a philosopher? By reflecting on the past, one may shape the future more clearly. In the following sections, I apply my interpretation of the soul's self-motion to the mythological ascent narratives with their respective role reversals within *Phaedrus*'s palinode and *Symposium*'s speeches by Alcibiades and Socrates (via Diotima). In both dialogues, Socrates uses role reversals in the lover-beloved relationship to highlight the nature of the soul's ascent through dramatic irony created by the speeches. For example, I will explain why Socrates reinterprets the myth of Zeus and Ganymede, where Zeus represents the traditional role of lover and Ganymede the beloved. Another example I will use includes the *daimōnic* power of philosophy as personified by Eros, mythologized as Pan, and embodied as Socrates.

Like Socrates' philosophical myths, role reversals are a charming part of Platonic discourse that aid the newcomer to philosophy by cultivating philosophical eros. Reversing a traditional role highlights the nature of the role and continues to ask the audience to look within and ask, "What is my role? What will be my role in the future?" or, more specifically, "What did I love? And what will I love in the future?" I focus on the mythological passages that invite the interlocutor to reflect on the relationship between

¹ In Greek tragedy, entrances and exits hold significant meaning. For a thorough investigation on this claim, see Oliver Taplin's *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.)

lover and beloved in a deeper way. Upon reflection, one begins to understand how the interplay of these two roles relates to attraction to Beauty itself. Socrates plays on the active and passive roles of mythological characters as well as his interlocutors to spark reflection and self-knowledge. Much like the myths, the role reversals aim to spur self-awareness and philosophical thinking in Socrates' interlocutors. Alcibiades's speech reveals the consequences of not ascending from the lower reaches of eros. The myth of the charioteer procession vividly portrays an erotic tale of ascent through actively participating in dialectics and self-reflection, which strengthens the soul's capacity to move toward Beauty itself.

4.1 Opening the Sluice-Gates: Socrates as Pan

In the palinode, Socrates (representing an *erastēs*) is compared to Pan and Zeus, while Phaedrus (representing the *erōmenos*) is compared to Ganymede.² Each analogy has multiple layers of interpretation, all pointing to the choice each individual must make: to stay on the superficial level of the speech as a passive *erōmenos*, or ascend the ladder of love toward Beauty itself as an *erastēs*, or active lover of wisdom. The further one reaches beyond the literal interpretation of Socrates' speeches, the more pleasure each new layer may bring as the reader observes the transformation of the beloved into Beauty itself and the lover into a philosopher.

The role reversal in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* acts as a *pharmakon* or love potion. Socrates uses his discursive charms to inspire a transformation from physical eros to

² The whole dialogue, like the *Symposium*, is set within the context of the lover-beloved relationship. The interplay between active lover (*erastēs*) and passive beloved (*erōmenos*) highlights the nature of love and education.

philosophical eros, guiding souls through speeches and ultimately dialogue toward ultimate reality. Sophists use rhetoric as *pharmakon* to deceive the audience concerning the truth of a matter, or even trick one into doing something against his will, while Socrates uses rhetoric and myth not to deceive but to open up the possibility for self-awareness. Werner says that “for Plato it is through dialectic—and not simply reading a myth or receiving images of beauty—that one ultimately makes the leap” to transforming oneself into a philosopher.³ Again, this is why *Phaedrus* does not end with the palinode. Socrates engages Phaedrus to discuss the speeches in order to evoke philosophical thinking in the passive speech-lover. By the end of their time in the countryside together, Phaedrus agrees to challenge Lysias’s rhetorical skills. Not only does Phaedrus pray to devote his life to philosophical discussion, but he promises to relay what he learned under the *platon* tree to his (former) idol Lysias. This role reversal challenges the traditional lover-beloved relationship as well as the benefits of rhetoric.

While discussing rhetoric, Socrates says, “How much more artful with speeches the Nymphs, daughters of Achelous, and Pan, son of Hermes, are, according to what you say, than Lysias, son of Cephalus!”⁴ Pan is mentioned twice in *Phaedrus*. Ancient Athenians attribute Pan’s father as Hermes, who relays messages from the gods.⁵ Hermes is also one of the principal Olympian gods and as such is present in the divine procession from the palinode. This means that Hermes is one of the eleven gods that the charioteers follow as a guide to the feast of the Forms. Pan, as his son, is related to the messenger god who connects the sensible realm of embodied souls to the intelligible

³ Werner 2012, 106.

⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 263d4–5.

⁵ Borgeaud 1988, 134.

realm of the divine Forms.⁶ Griswold reminds the reader that according to Plato's *Cratylus*, Pan is the "double-natured son of Hermes (the inventor of *logos*)."⁷ Words, like Pan, have the ability to reveal Beauty or images of Beauty in the same way that Pan is both humanlike in his musical abilities and goat-like in his lascivious preoccupations.⁸ This ambiguity resembles that of Eros, from Diotima's speech in *Symposium*, which recounts his birth from Poros and Penia. These parents also instill a double nature—one of both resource and lack.⁹

The second mention is in the concluding prayer when Socrates says, "O Dear Pan and all the other gods of this place, grant that I may be beautiful (*καλαῶ*) inside. Let all my external possessions be in friendly harmony (*φίλια*) with what is within."¹⁰ This is not the god one would think you would pray to for beauty. Pan is notoriously ugly in his goat-like features. Reflecting on this connection one could argue that the beauty Pan provides is from his ecstatic pipe playing. The *Homeric Hymn* describes how Pan,

as he returns from the chase, sounds his note, playing sweet and low on his pipes of reed: not even she could excel him in melody—that bird who in flower-laden spring pouring forth her lament utters honey-voiced song amid the leaves.¹¹

There is beauty in Pan. In the same way that sensible objects participate in the form of Beauty itself, so Pan participates in beauty via musical harmonies. However, Socrates does not hope to guide souls to the external beauty of objects alone, but to embrace them as reflections, albeit murky ones, of the greater Beauty itself. For this reason, Socrates

⁶ Hermes's symbol is the crane—another reference, among many, of birds in *Phaedrus*.

⁷ Plato *Cratylus* 408d1.

⁸ Griswold 1986, 228. *Cratylus* 408b–d.

⁹ Plato *Symposium* 203b.

¹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 279b8–9.

¹¹ Homer *Homeric Hymns* 19: 14–20.

prays to Pan to help us uncover the hidden or “internal” beauty in order to understand how the internal form of Beauty itself “makes it external” by participation. The soul has access to this knowledge by contemplating how internal and external beauty relate to one another through participation. This relationship is also expressed in *Symposium*’s ladder of love and *Phaedrus*’s charioteer analogy. Another example is provided by Alcibiades’ speech in *Symposium* when he says Socrates’ external body looks satyr-like whereas his internal soul is filled with “tiny statues of the gods.”¹² Socrates’ prayer brings to the foreground Pan’s external ugliness while pairing it with his internal gift for music in order to allow the reader to think about how internal and external beauty are related in the self. The body and soul each participate in Beauty itself. The body expresses lower beauty whereas the soul is able to express higher beauty more akin to Beauty itself.

In both references to Pan in *Phaedrus*, he is revered beyond his usual status as the merry, lascivious prankster and sometimes rapist.¹³ Pan is upheld as the fertility god who romps outside the city walls in fields, forests, and next to streams, much like the setting for the dialogue. Pan “embodies the uncivilized power of procreation which nevertheless remains indispensable and fascinating for civilized life.”¹⁴ Socrates does not pray to Athena, goddess of wisdom and protector of his city. He prays to the pastoral fertility god who frolics in the fields and rests besides streams, just as Socrates is doing in the company of this beautiful boy.

To be fertile in an all-encompassing sense involves more than physical

¹² Plato *Symposium* 215a5–b5.

¹³ In *Homeric Hymn 19* to Pan, he is referred to as “the dear son of Hermes, with his goat’s feet and two horns—a lover of merry noise [...] they called the boy Pan because he delighted all their hearts.” Plato’s *Phaedrus* reads much like a Homeric hymn as Socrates invokes the Muses and infuses his speeches with rhetorical flourishes.

¹⁴ Walter Burkert, trans., by John Raffan, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1985), 172.

reproduction. Pan is often depicted with his *erōmenos*, Daphnis, whom Pan taught to play the pipes. Daphnis was later purported to have invented pastoral poetry. Will Socrates teach Phaedrus to play the pipes? Pan is also fertile, in the context of *Phaedrus*, because he inspires speechmaking and possibly philosophical reflection. It becomes clear why Socrates invoked Pan, the *erastēs* par excellence, on this extraordinary day in the country. Socrates hopes that his day with Phaedrus is a fertile one—transitioning from seduction through speeches to consummation of philosophical eros through dialogue, and perhaps even a little soul ascent with fortified wings. Socrates’ goal, as articulated in his prayer to Eros, is for Phaedrus to rise above his love for speeches and “devote his life to [Eros] through philosophical discussions.”¹⁵ Phaedrus is fertile ground for speeches, so now let his soul open up to the possibilities of fertility in accessing the Forms through dialectical exchanges.

Plato’s description of mind-bending love in *Phaedrus* illuminates the organic role of eros in the individual’s search for the good life. Keep in mind that the following description is told from the perspective of the lover (*erastēs*) who already has a well-trained soul upon embodiment, presumably the soul of a philosopher. The “ladder of love” as erotic ascent depicts the intense and challenging process of the soul recollecting Beauty itself starting from physical attraction to a beautiful boy:

A recent initiate, however, who has seen much in heaven—when he sees a godlike face or bodily form that has captured Beauty well, first he shudders and a fear comes over him [...] once he has looked at him his chill gives way to sweating and high fever, because the stream of beauty that pours through his eyes

¹⁵ Plato *Symposium* 257b5.

warms him up and waters the growth of his wings.¹⁶

The idea that this process, the development of philosophical eros, occurs in a “recent initiate” of the divine mysteries points to Socrates’ assumption that the role of *erastēs* is exclusive. Not everyone can educate the youth.¹⁷ The group of people who should serve as educators of the youth are the few and the rare that have the deepest connection to Forms. Socrates already stated that the most well trained souls, once embodied, usually become philosophers. Of significance is the idea that beauty “nourishes” the soul.

Meanwhile, the heat warms him and melts the places where the wings once grew, places that were long ago closed off with hard scabs to keep the sprouts from coming back; but as nourishment flows in, the feather shafts swell and rush to grow from their roots beneath every part of the soul (long ago, you see, the entire soul had wings).¹⁸

The soul is not depicted in its tripartite structure here. Rather, Socrates mentions that the wings are not limited to one pair. Each of the three parts will grow a pair of wings.

Socrates alludes to a time when the “entire soul” had wings. The whole surface area of the soul, each of the three parts included, had several pairs of wings. Much like Aristophanes’ tragic-comic speech in *Symposium*, the image of the primordial soul is

¹⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 251a–b2.

¹⁷ Cf. Plato’s *Apology* 25b. Socrates argues against Meletus by using the horse-trainer analogy. All Athenians are not competent horse trainers, and can possibly do harm to a horse if they try to train it. The person competent to train a horse is a horse trainer. In the same vein, not every Athenian is a model citizen that should perform the function of cultivating virtue in the youth. Socrates implies that the person competent to educate the youth is a person who exhibits virtue and loves wisdom, i.e., a philosopher.

¹⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 251b2–b6.

both humorous and horrifying.¹⁹ Trying to picture the outline of a charioteer with his horses covered in a vast array of wings is ridiculous; imagining the logistics of ascent in such a creature is depressing. Flight would be nearly impossible; it would require perfect harmony of not only all three parts, but of the many pairs of wings on each part to synchronize flying to a specific goal. Except for the divine soul, ascent to the divine banquet would be virtually impossible.²⁰

Returning to the description of the soul where each of the three parts has one set of wings, Socrates continues to describe how the embodied soul gets its wings back.

Now the whole soul seethes and throbs in this condition. Like a child whose teeth are just starting to grow in, and its gums are all aching and itching—that is exactly how the soul feels when it begins to grow wings. It swells up and aches and tingles as it grows them.²¹

Our “philosopher” sees the beauty of the boy, which stirs the memory of Beauty itself that is locked in the dark recesses of the soul. Each feather follicle begins to enflame and seethe with pain. And because at one time the soul was entirely covered in wings, the entire soul throbs. Unlocking this divine memory causes the soul’s wings to burst forth from their scabby prisons, in the same way that the heart reels encountering her first love and the mind is blown when a young pupil encounters her first exposure to the “real”

¹⁹ Plato *Symposium* 189c–193d. Aristophanes explains the origin of love as a punishment for the hubris of the original humans, who believed that as such strong and powerful beings they could conquer the gods. Aristophanes’ description of the original humans is ridiculous. They are round and do cartwheels to travel quickly. On the tragic end, love is trying to become one with your other half—an impossible feat since Zeus ripped them in half. Love is a distraction from conquest and a weakening of human power.

²⁰ This reading of the wings of the soul also supports C.D.C. Reeve’s position that the soul is undivided reason. It would make more sense in the charioteer analogy if only one part of the soul had wings, and not all three parts. Reason is the recollecting part of the soul, so it is the part that would sprout wings nourished by the memories of the divine banquet. The wild and noble horses are the motivating force that aids reason’s journey toward wisdom.

²¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 251c1–5.

world. In both cases, the heart and mind experience pain because they are using a part of themselves that has never been exercised. The young woman's heart, when experiencing her first love, will fill with joy in one moment and be thrown into the pits of despair the next. She does not know better because she has never loved before. The student who has never exercised critical thinking and independent thought will initially struggle in a setting where she is asked to do so.²² Like using an atrophied muscle, both heart and mind will experience struggle and pain before joy and balance:

But when it looks upon the beauty of the boy and takes in the stream of particles flowing from this beauty (that is what this is called “desire”), when it is watered and warmed by this, then all the pain subsides and is replaced with joy. When, however, it is separated from the boy and runs dry, then the opening of the passages in which the feathers grow are dried shut and keep the wings from sprouting. Then the stump of each feather is blocked in its desire and it throbs like a pulsing artery while the feather pricks at its passageway, with the result that the whole soul is stung all around, and the pain simply drives it wild—but then, when it remembers the boy in his beauty, it recovers its joy.²³

Socrates is describing both the mental and physical reaction of the *erastēs* to a beautiful body. The focus is, of course, how divine madness infects our mind and causes an obsessive attachment to the object of beauty. Yet the physical parallels are noteworthy. As I mentioned earlier, Socrates is describing erotic attraction in a way that Phaedrus, as a young man, can easily grasp. The “pulsing artery [...] driving him wild” alludes to a

²² This is common in “Introduction to Philosophy” where rote memorization and regurgitation will not lead to success in the course, although this is the educational model to which many students are accustomed.

²³ Plato *Phaedrus* 251c5–d6.

phallus, which would have been an image associated with Pan or a libidinous satyr. It is an account of love that reflects Phaedrus's own budding sexuality. Socrates as Pan concocts a myth that has the potential to give the onset of lust a metaphysical twist. Eros is more than an uncontrollable urge that overpowers a young man—it is the blossoming of his soul. Now the soul needs the proper training in order to properly channel all of its blossoming.

The visual image of the phallus-soul does not end with Pan. One ancient talisman took the form of a “phallus-bird-quadruped” that depicted the “Greek association of the male organ with a bird.”²⁴ Eva C. Keuls writes that the phallus serves as a charm representing “the essence of man's being [used] in the rites of black magic, which the Athenians, even those of the higher classes, were not above practicing.”²⁵ The phallus bird could be used as a fertility charm, a humorous embellishment, or a reminder of one's manliness. Much like Socrates' use of the charioteer analogy as *pharmakon* appealing to Phaedrus's youth and interests, I believe Socrates is playing on this association of the phallus with a bird to appeal to Phaedrus. If the image of a phallus with wings is already a familiar one, then Phaedrus will more likely connect to it and even reflect on why Socrates is using it in this specific context.

The image is not used solely to appeal to Phaedrus as something he is already familiar with, but it points to a deeper meaning. Another example of Socrates playing on bird analogies is from Plato's *Theaetetus* where “memory is like an aviary [...] and

²⁴ Stefano de Caro, *The Secret Cabinet in the National Archeological Museum of Naples* (Naples: Electa Napoli, 2000), 36.

²⁵ Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 77. As an aside, on this page Figure 63 “Phallic fantasy: of the bird with phallus head” is side by side with Figure 62 “Phallic fantasy: a horse with a phallus head.” The horse and bird are combined in Plato's charioteer analogy.

recollection is akin to seeking and finding within it a particular bird.”²⁶ The description of the aviary as “stocked with birds of every sort, some in flocks apart from the rest, some in small groups, and some solitary, flying in any direction amongst them all” is like the description of the chariots with varying aptitudes attempting to ascend to the divine banquet.²⁷ The birds of the mind’s aviary represent ideas, and the question is how do we learn, recollect, and have access to true ideas. We have to learn to recognize each bird for what it is. The birds of the mind’s aviary represent knowledge of the Forms, much like the wings of the soul represent the process of recollection and forgetting—when the chariot peeps at the Forms the wings grow stronger, while when the chariot fails to rise above to the Forms, the wings shrivel.

The image of the phallus bird is similar to the description of the soul in *Phaedrus*. The comic and flirtatious description of the soul re-growing its wings is offset by the description of the agony of the process. If this winged creature is to rise up to its final destination, it must strengthen the stamina of the wings. Otherwise the individual will be doomed to a frustrated and impotent existence. A winged creature living a flightless life is a sad thought. A being filled with a divine soul unable to express its nature—ascend—is even sadder.

From the outlandish mix of these two feelings—pain and joy—comes anguish and helpless raving: in its madness the lover’s soul cannot sleep at night or stay put by day; it rushes, yearning, wherever it expects to see the person who has the beauty (κάλλος). When it does see him, it opens the sluice-gates of desire and sets free

²⁶ Plato *Theaetetus* 197b–199c

²⁷ Plato *Theaetetus* 197e.

the parts that were blocked up before. And now that the pain and the goading have stopped, it can catch its breath and once more suck in, for the moment, this sweetest of all pleasures. This is not at all willing to give up, and no one is more important to it than the beautiful boy.²⁸

The onset of love is fraught with pain and confusion. If the attraction were not so strong, no one would continue down this stressful path. It is only because the individual is possessed by divine madness that he can persist. Love is not for the faint of heart. But after suffering, this poor tormented soul finally glimpses the beloved and experiences ecstasy. The beloved is the source of all sorrow, but more the source of joy. Part of divine madness is an obsession on the part of the lover to always be near the beloved because “in addition to its reverence for one who has such beauty, the soul has discovered that the boy is the only doctor for all that terrible pain,” which is the “experience we humans call love, you beautiful boy.”²⁹ Divine madness is the intersection of pleasure and pain as the soul becomes reoriented to what truly matters. Martha Nussbaum asserts:

Unlike the friendship of the nonlover, it is really a kind of madness and distraction—full of the gadfly’s sting of painful longing, which cannot permit the lover rest or satisfaction in the absence of the young man’s beauty.³⁰

In other words, divine madness fuels self-motion. Without this form of erotic madness the soul would not have the possibility to re-orient itself to the divine. Under all other pretenses, the lover is actually attracted to Beauty itself. Physical attraction is the first step among many to understand the source of all beautiful appearances.

²⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 251d–252a.

²⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 250a–252b.

³⁰ Martha Nussbaum 2002, 71.

After his vivid description of the soul's response to beauty, Socrates turns the conversation to education. In the traditional lover-beloved relationship, the goal is for the *erastēs* to educate the *erōmenos* in civic virtues. Because the *erastēs* already possesses these virtues, and is a model citizen, all the boy needs to do, presumably, is to follow in his mentor's footsteps. The *erōmenos* mimics the virtues of the *erastēs*. In this sense, the beloved is the legacy of the lover's virtue, much as Daphnis and his pipe playing and invention of poetry is the legacy of Pan. In the charioteer analogy, Plato includes the idea of legacy in the description of eros within the context of the lover-beloved relationship.

The nature of each soul is determined by which of the eleven gods it followed in the heavenly procession to the feast of Forms.³¹ A follower of Zeus's chariot is Zeus-like "in the nobility of his soul."³² Each lover "takes their god's path and seeks for their own a boy whose nature is like the god's." Like is attracted to like, so Zeus-souls are attracted to other Zeus-souls. When the Zeus-lover finds his Zeus-beloved "they emulate the god, convincing the boy they love and training him to follow their god's pattern and way of life, so far as it is possible in each case."³³ Education, in this model, is a form of worship of one's "mentor" god. Just as the soul followed one of the gods in the procession to the divine banquet, so too does the lover continue to follow in the legacy of his god while also teaching his beloved to do the same. Socrates highlights the benefits of this type of divine processional education by explaining that lovers "show no envy, no mean-spirited lack of generosity, toward the boy, but make every possible effort to draw him into being

³¹ This is reminiscent of the *Republic's* myth of the metals, which states that each person is born with either a gold, silver, iron, or bronze constitution, that determines their role in *Kallipolis* (414c–415d).

³² Plato *Phaedrus* 2502e.

³³ Plato *Phaedrus* 253b.

totally like themselves and the god to whom they are devoted.”³⁴ Socrates interprets education as a spiritual exercise. It is simultaneously an act of worship of the divine, and an emulation of the divine in order to strengthen the soul. We are both divine and human.

Socrates returns to the charioteer analogy to explain what makes our “mixed” soul different from the divine soul.

One of the horses, we said, is good, the other not [...] The horse that is on the right, or nobler, side is upright in frame and well jointed, with a high neck and a regal nose; his coat is white, his eyes are black, and he is a lover of honor with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone.”³⁵

The gods have two of these horses attached to their chariot, which makes controlling the direction of their chariots easy. Humans have only one. The qualities of the noble horse correspond to the spirited part of the soul as explained in Plato’s *Republic*. Just as the efficient charioteer will train his horses to obey him, and the noble horse acts as a model example of obedience for the wild horse, so spiritedness in the harmonious soul will obey the rule of reason and keep the appetites in check according to reason’s prescriptions. The good horse exhibits self-control and also control over the bad horse, or appetitive element. Socrates explains,

The other horse is a crooked great jumble of limbs with a short bull-neck, a pug nose, black skin, and bloodshot white eyes; companion to wild boast and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears—deaf as a post—and just barely yields to

³⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 253b.

³⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 253d.

horsewhip and goad combined.³⁶

The bad horse represents the appetitive element of the soul. It is difficult to train because above all else it seeks the satisfaction of its multifarious desires. In contrast to the good horse, it cares little for honor gained by obedience to the charioteer, or any form of modesty. It cares only for its own desires or whims, whatever they may be. The bad horse has no limits; no transgression is out of bounds. It seeks only instant gratification, and is not concerned with the means to this end. It would destroy the entire soul for a moment of pleasure.

The lover acts like the noble horse in the sense that he is obedient to his god and his godlike nature as he trains the boy in the same virtues. The charioteer of the unmixed horses is divine because he is able to reflect the wisdom he possesses in his virtuous actions by way of the two noble horses. It is easy for a god to be perfectly virtuous because there are no lower desires holding back his potential to ascend. I do not think Plato is bemoaning our state as lowly humans. Rather, he is trying to understand the human condition as straddling both animalistic and divine, like a *daimōn*. Although humans will never be gods in the strictest sense, we can ascend to the heights of wisdom with the help of what is available to us mere mortals.

In the same way that our souls are part divine and part animal, so is Pan. Griswold draws parallels between the dual natures of Pan and *logos* by saying “their upper part is true, smooth, and godlike.”³⁷ The higher nature of Pan is human and the higher nature of

³⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 253e.

³⁷ Griswold 1986, 228.

logos is wisdom.³⁸ As for the lower part, it is “false and goatlike; it shares in myths and tragedy, dwells among men, and is dangerous to *sophrosyne*.”³⁹ Pan and *logos* can inspire great speeches and spiritual ascent, but his goat song can also lead the naïve or careless astray.⁴⁰ In *Cratylus*, Socrates likens Pan to *logos*. Socrates says, “You know that speech makes all things (παᾶν) known and always makes them circulate and move about, and is twofold, true and false” which means that speeches can distract from recollection or inspire a desire to pursue the Beauty; *logos* can provide images of beauty or Beauty.⁴¹ Socrates continues,

Well, the true part is smooth and divine and dwells aloft among the gods, but falsehood dwells below among common men, is rough and like the tragic goat; for tales and falsehoods are most at home there, in the tragic life.

There is a common or lower Pan and a higher or heavenly Pan in the same way that Pausanias claims that there are two versions of Aphrodite: Pandemos and Urania.⁴²

Then Pan, who declares and always moves (ἀεὶ παλῶν) all, is rightly called goat-herd (αἰπόλος), being the double-natured son of Hermes, smooth in his upper parts, rough and goat-like in his lower parts. And Pan, if he is the son of Hermes, is either speech or the brother of speech, and that brother resembles

³⁸ In *Symposium*, Pausanias differentiates common and heavenly Aphrodite (180d–181c). It is noteworthy that Pan and Eros have a connection through Aphrodite. Borgeaud states that “in the fourth century, Pan is clearly connected with *Aphrodite* in secular iconography.” He describes one example of a scene carved into a bronze mirror where “Pan rides the goat of Aphrodite *Pandemos*” and another where Aphrodite is gently pushing a flirtatious Pan away with her sandal as Eros floats overhead. In the fifth century there are a number of depictions that connect Pan with the birth of Aphrodite from the ground. Borgeaud observes the “sudden appearance of the goddess from the soil, whether an epiphany or her actual birth, is joined by the goat-god’s dance; his hooves strike the earth to call her forth.” (Borgeaud 1988, 138).

³⁹ Griswold 1986, 228.

⁴⁰ Etymologically, tragedy (*tragōidia*) means goat (*tragos*) song (*oide*).

⁴¹ Plato *Cratylus* 408d.

⁴² Plato *Symposium* 180d–e.

brother is not at all surprising.⁴³

Pan has the power to say everything, whether true or false, *pharmakon* as poison or cure. He is either true speech or the brother of speech, and most people cannot tell the difference because they so closely resemble each other.

In the charioteer analogy, the gods do not love. Gods do not need to re-orient themselves to Beauty itself. They possess the perfect memory, and the return trip to the divine banquet is one of ease. In contrast, the lover struggles to express the spirited element as he overpowers his erotic attraction to the boy and directs that passion into philosophical erotics, or passion directed to stimulating the boy's capacity to ascend. Humans attempt to become as divine as possible through eros. Love makes the transformation from erotic attraction to philosophical erotics possible by re-orienting the soul through strengthening the noble horse and taming the wild horse.

The lover is concerned with teaching the boy how to train his bad horse before it has a chance to develop and grow strong. Another incentive that attracts the lover to youth is that he must get to them while they are still able to train the bad horse. The later the training begins, the more difficult it will be to suppress the bad horse, as in the following case of the lover's soul reacting to the beautiful boy:

Now when the charioteer looks love in the eye, his entire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire. As for the horses, the one who is obedient to the charioteer is still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame, and so prevents itself from jumping on the boy. The other one, however, no longer responds to the whip or the goad of the charioteer; it

⁴³ Plato *Cratylus* 408d.

leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest the pleasure of sex. At first the other two resist, angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are dreadfully wrong.⁴⁴

The above passage represents an accurate portrayal of physical yearning with its “tingles” and “goading.” The crux is that the bad horse alone does not experience this yearning. All three parts of the soul—the charioteer as he gazes, the noble horse as he is shamed and controlled, and the bad horse as he lurches for the boy—all express the same desire ignited by the beauty of the boy. The desires of all three parts of the soul are aligned in attraction to beauty. In other areas, the three parts may express a mutiny of desires. How can a soul ascend when all three parts with its disparate wings do not have the same desired goal? In the case of erotic attraction, the soul desires the same object, but each in a different manner. The difference is that the charioteer and noble horse share in the divine nature of restraint, while the bad horse, as the animalistic part of the soul, cannot control itself.

Pan is also distinguished as being one of the gods known for erotic chase.⁴⁵ I argue that this is comparable to Socrates’ erotic pursuit of wisdom; Socrates pursues Beauty itself as Pan chases lovers. In fact, Borgeaud notes that “when a god or a huntsman or lover of races about, he looks very much like a messenger.”⁴⁶ Pan gained his status of messenger from his father, Hermes, and from his overabundance of eros. Socrates is compared to a *daimōn* because he is always on the erotic hunt for Forms and

⁴⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 254a.

⁴⁵ Borgeaud 1988, 134.

⁴⁶ Borgeaud 1988, 134.

as such he straddles the realm between ignorance and knowledge.⁴⁷ Phaedrus lured Socrates out of the city with his “enticing” speech, while Socrates is intellectually chasing after Phaedrus, trying to construct speeches that both appeal to him and spur self-reflection and philosophical thinking.⁴⁸ Socrates’ pursuit of Phaedrus mirrors his pursuit of Beauty itself, as well as his desire to cultivate philosophical eros in the people of Athens—young and old alike.⁴⁹ The more Zeus-like charioteer souls there are ascending to the divine banquet, the less of a struggle it will be for all parties involved.

The madness brought on by eros has a dark side—unlimited, untrained, and unfocused eros is what we commonly understand as lust, obsession, and jealousy.⁵⁰ The chase of Pan, much like the chase of eros, can remain on the lower levels of the ladder of love. Socrates’ first speech gives an example of the erotic chase that leads to descent of the soul. He explains that when reason replaces love in the *erastēs*, he wants nothing to do with his former *erōmenos*. The lover has “switched roles and must flee” from the beloved, who “must chase after him, angry and cursing” as he attempts to hold the lover to his promises.⁵¹ The soul as chariot also has an interesting parallel to Pan as the pursuer of beauty. The chariot’s horses enable the charioteer to move, and the wildest force is the dark horse, appetite. Left to its own devices, the dark horse will chase after the beautiful

⁴⁷ Plato *Symposium* 204a.

⁴⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d5–6.

⁴⁹ Cf. Plato *Apology* when Socrates exclaims he would rather die than give up his philosophical pursuits. He says, “as long as I draw breath and am able, I won’t give up practicing philosophy, exhorting you and also showing the way to any of you I ever happen to meet, saying just the sorts of things I am accustomed to say” (29d). Socrates continues, “This I will do for anyone I meet” as “you see that I do nothing else but go around trying to persuade you” (30a). Socrates’ message for all is not to care for lower goods like money and honor, but to care about the soul most intensely (30b), and he is more than happy to relay the message to any he meets.

⁵⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 241c1–5. Socrates lists the qualities of lower or deformed eros as it harms the lover’s beloved in the end: “deceitful, irritable, jealous, disgusting, harmful to his property, harmful to his physical fitness, and absolutely devastating to the cultivation of his soul.”

⁵¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 241a–b. Italics mine.

boy until he has taken his fill of his body and soul.

Pan and satyrs represent the animalistic forces within human nature in their half animal and half human form. Pan is a lesser god and half goat, whereas satyrs are *daimōns* with horse characteristics. Elizabeth Belfiore describes satyrs as “big, misshapen creatures, with snub noses, high foreheads, shaggy hair, thick, short legs, large eyes, and large, erect penises,” which sounds like the description of the charioteer’s dark horse as well as Socrates.⁵² In this dialogue, Pan represents the satyr-like dark horse of the soul. Our unrestrained animal nature leads the soul astray and on a path of descent. Why are Pan, satyrs, and Socrates associated together? Because the same erotically driven animal nature aids the soul’s ascent when it is properly reinforced with self-control and the knowledge of its true pleasure and aim—Beauty itself. The charioteer cannot move without the dark horse; the harmony of the tripartite soul is impossible without the appetitive part.

In order to overcome the bad horse’s impulse to rape the boy, Socrates provides a violent description of training the lover’s soul. In response to desire, the charioteer and noble horse “resist, angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are dreadfully wrong.”⁵³ Anger at the self is the response of the spirited element to vice. In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates proves the existence of this third part of the soul, the spirited part, which is distinct from reason and appetite. He illustrates it with a story of Leontius, who had a strong sexual attraction to pale boys, which led him to enjoy peering at dead boys—an act he found repulsive. He understood the perversity of taking sexual pleasure

⁵² Elizabeth Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art: Love for Wisdom in Four Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 259.

⁵³ Plato *Phaedrus* 254a.

from a corpse.⁵⁴ As he was walking outside the North Wall toward Athens, he passes some fresh corpses. Leontius simultaneously has an “appetitive desire to look at them” and a feeling of disgust that makes him turn away and put his hands over his eyes.⁵⁵ When the inner struggle to control his desire is too grueling, he gives up, opens his eyes as wide as he can, and exclaims, “Look for yourselves, you evil wretches; take your fill of the beautiful sight.”⁵⁶ Leontius’s anger at himself shows his “spirit becoming the ally of his reason” against his vile appetite.⁵⁷ If appetite and reason were the only two parts of the soul, there would not be a part that could “take sides” with what is known to be right versus what is desired.

Likewise in the charioteer myth, the lover knows taking advantage of the boy’s body is wrong because reason tells him, and he feels that it is wrong because of the noble horse’s anger. Socrates cautions that the lover’s willpower is not yet at its peak and ultimately “when they see no end to their trouble, they are led forward, reluctantly agreeing to do as they have been told.”⁵⁸ The lover approaches the boy, and in doing so is “struck by the boy’s face as if by a bolt of lightning.” There is an instant chemistry that begins the alchemical process of love as “his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-control.”⁵⁹ Beauty comes first, then self-control. In order for the soul to practice training itself with self-control, it must first be driven mad by beauty.

⁵⁴ Plato *Republic* 439e5–440a5.

⁵⁵ Plato *Republic* 440a.

⁵⁶ Plato *Republic* 440a. It is interesting to note the parallels between Leontius’s anger at his eyes, and the consequence of Laius’s rape of his young pupil—that his son Oedipus would destroy his own eyes (after killing his father Laius and marrying his mother Jocasta). Eyesight is also the body’s source of tempting visual beauty that arouses dark desires.

⁵⁷ Plato *Republic* 440b.

⁵⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 254b.

⁵⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 254b.

4.2 Taming the Dark Horse of the Soul: Alcibiades and Self-Control

Self-control is necessary for the soul to ascend, motivated by philosophical eros and informed by reason. Applying the charioteer analogy, if the bad horse never struggled against the will of the charioteer, then neither the charioteer nor the noble horse would have the chance to grow strong. And the one day that the bad horse finally reared its ugly head, the chariot as a whole would flounder under the duress. Gods do not have to grow strong or struggle or learn or love because they are already perfect. For the lover who is unable to pair beauty and self-control, as they are meant to stand with each other as in the divine banquet, then the lover will potentially succumb to vice and rape his beloved. It is the responsibility of the active lover as a self-mover to practice self-control as part of the “art of love.” Recovering his memories of the divine banquet, the lover begins to understand the broader reach of eros.

Another example of the importance of self-control in response to eros is in *Charmides*. Socrates responds with similar enthusiasm to the physical beauty of the resting place Phaedrus chose as he does to Charmides’ physical beauty when Critias and Chaerephon point it out. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates exclaims, “By Hera, it really is a beautiful resting place” and goes on to describe the *platon* tree in detail.⁶⁰ In *Charmides*, Socrates narrates to the reader, “But at that moment, when I saw him, I confess that I was quite astonished at his beauty and stature.”⁶¹ Later, Socrates says that he “caught sight of the inwards of his garment, and took the flame. Then I could no longer contain myself.”⁶² On the literal level, it seems that peeping at Charmides’ naked body has turned Socrates on.

⁶⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 230b2.

⁶¹ Plato *Charmides* 154c2.

⁶² Plato *Charmides* 155d.

However, as a consummate *psychagōgue* and not a pederast, one can argue that Socrates caught sight of Charmides' budding soul, which made him very excited indeed. Either way, Socrates exhibits self-control:

I thought how well Cydias understood the nature of love, when in speaking of a fair youth, he warns someone “not to bring the fawn in the sight of the lion to be devoured by him,” for I felt that I had been overcome by a sort of wild-beast appetite.⁶³

Socrates is not really referring to himself, but of all the men that surround Charmides. Upon his return to Athens after a long expedition, all the men want to talk about is how lovely Charmides is and that Socrates simply must meet him immediately. By the end of their time together, it does not seem that they have reflected on or are able to practice self-control. Socrates implores Charmides to “examine yourself” without the use of charms because “the more wise and temperate you are, the happier you will be.”⁶⁴ Charmides misses the point and responds, “I shall be willing to be charmed by you daily, until you say that I have had enough,” an attitude that Critias fully endorses.⁶⁵ Socrates implicitly questions whether or not Charmides' pool of lover-educators, Critias for the time being, can teach the virtue of self-control to the youth when Critias's aim is “to command” the youth.⁶⁶ Critias commands Charmides to be charmed by Socrates, and when Socrates asks what the two are conspiring about and if he should be worried that they “are about to use violence, without giving [him] a hearing in court,” Charmides

⁶³ Plato *Charmides* 155d–e.

⁶⁴ Plato *Charmides* 176a.

⁶⁵ Plato *Charmides* 176b2.

⁶⁶ Plato *Charmides* 176c.

responds that he will because Critias orders him to.⁶⁷ The dialogue ends with Charmides slyly telling Socrates that he should not resist him, and Socrates says that he will not. The flaws of the lover-beloved relationship are expressed in the struggle between the dark horse, on one hand, and, on the other, the charioteer with his noble steed. Critias has lost to the beastly appetitive part of the soul, and his beloved, Charmides will likely succumb to the same fate. Critias the lion has devoured Charmides the fawn.

Socrates describes the struggle of the soul with a vivid description of the horses. In response to the beloved's beauty, both horses fall back in awe and then struggle in different directions. The noble horse "drenches the whole soul with sweat out of shame and awe" while the bad horse "bursts into a torrent of insults [...] accusing the charioteer and yokemate of all sorts of cowardice and unmanliness for abandoning their position and their agreement."⁶⁸ The soul continues to feel the intermingling of pleasure and pain as it struggles to make sense of this erotic attraction to the beautiful boy. The feather shafts have opened. At this point, how does the soul grow its wings? Certainly the wings do not develop by taking advantage of the boy's body. The charioteer continues to pull violently on the reins until the bad horse submits to his will.

When the bad horse has suffered this same thing time after time, it stops being so insolent; now it is humble enough to follow the charioteer's warnings, and when it sees the beautiful boy it dies of fright, with the result now at last the lover's soul follows its boy in reverence and awe.⁶⁹

It is only after the bad horse has been tamed that the lover can enter into a relationship

⁶⁷ Plato *Charmides* 176c.

⁶⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 254c.

⁶⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 254e.

with the beloved: “This, then, is the true lover’s heart’s desire: if he follows that desire in the manner I described, this friend who has been driven mad by love will secure a consummation for the one he has befriended that is as beautiful and blissful as I said—if, of course, he captures him.”⁷⁰ The captive is caught via self-control, not seduction or rape. The chase is intense, but only through taming the animalistic “Pan” within can one reach the goal of the chase. To grow wings the lover must learn how to love in the divine sense, going beyond the physical chase; his appetites must fall in line with the noble horse’s self-control to allow the charioteer to ascend to the heights of friends in pursuit of Beauty itself.

The description of love as the beginning of ascent occurs in the older established man as he is attracted to the beauty of the younger man. However, Socrates is telling this myth to a young man. In one sense this part of the myth seems to act as a cautionary tale. Phaedrus should look for a lover who exhibits the qualities of a person who has an advanced soul, a soul actively ascending to Beauty itself rather than descending into lust. If he is attracted to a good soul, the boy is much more likely to engage in philosophical erotics instead of stagnating at the first rung of physical eros. In another sense, the examination of the soul’s structural response to eros is one-sided. Socrates explains the benefits the lover receives from divine madness, but not the benefits for the beloved other than friendship.

It seems as though divine madness puts the young boy at a considerable amount of risk. If the lover is unable to control himself, he will make sexual advances on the impressionable young boy. How then will the young boy learn self-control if it is lacking

⁷⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 254e.

in his teacher, the man he is supposed to mimic in order to become a good citizen? Why do some souls follow their teacher (and disposition) and ascend to the virtuous life, while others when exposed to beauty either remain unchanged or worse, descend into vice?⁷¹

Why does Alcibiades fail when Phaedrus seems on the path of success? Whereas Phaedrus's appetites are infatuated with the beauty of speeches, Alcibiades's appetites are more varied. Griswold observes that it is precisely Alcibiades "remarkable eros" that "prevents him from turning to philosophy."⁷² Alcibiades' speech in *Symposium* illustrates how Socrates was unable to inspire Alcibiades to reflect on his eros and then to learn how to channel it properly. Griswold notes that "for all his mediocrity, Phaedrus is closer to philosophy than Alcibiades, and at the end of the dialogue Phaedrus agrees to represent the claims of philosophy to his former beloved (Lysias). Socrates has, to that extent, succeeded with Phaedrus."⁷³ The potential-sophist experiences beauty in the same way the potential-philosopher does on the lower rungs of the ladder of love; it is the movement from image to Forms that matters. Erotic ascent is contingent upon the individual soul transforming "physical" eros (appetites) and "reputation" eros (spiritedness) to philosophical eros. It is possible for Alcibiades to remain on the lower reaches of the ladder of love and never ascend from body to mind if he never learns to tame erotic passion with wisdom. Alcibiades replaces wisdom with Socrates himself, i.e., Beauty itself with Socrates' golden god within: his virtuous life and beautiful mind.⁷⁴

Phaedrus's advantage is that he is attracted to the beauty of *logos* and not simply

⁷¹ In Book IX of *Republic* Plato gives an account of desire, the tyrannical man, pleasure, and the well-ordered soul that explains why one person becomes a philosopher-king and another becomes a tyrant. The tyrant is an example of the depths of vice into which desire can lead if one is not careful to orient one's soul to love the Good Itself.⁷¹

⁷² Griswold 1986, 23.

⁷³ Griswold 1986, 23.

⁷⁴ Plato *Symposium* 222a.

beautiful bodies. Even though humans have souls that participated in the divine procession to the Forms, not every soul was trained sufficiently to successfully complete the cycle. The well-trained chariots were able to ascend and peep at the Forms for an extended time; the less skilled ones could not get a sustained view, but rose and fell catching only glimpses. Socrates gives a few explanations of why some embodied souls struggle to remember true Beauty and why a lover of wisdom should help others ascend. According to the myth of the palinode, a soul's past life during the divine procession provided some deficiency of training. Another is that "bad company"—which could refer to the child's parents, teachers, cultural and societal norms, pantheon of gods and heroes, and most of all friends and lovers—deformed the soul:

But not every soul is easily reminded of the reality there by what it finds here—not souls that got only a brief glance at the reality there, not souls who had such bad luck when they fell down here that they were twisted by bad company into lives of injustice so that they forgot the sacred objects they had seen before. Only a few remain whose memory is good enough; and they are startled when they see an image of what they saw up there. Then they are beside themselves, and their experience is beyond comprehension because they cannot fully grasp what it is that they are seeing.⁷⁵

Even the soul of the strongest constitution would find it nearly impossible to go against the grain of parents, friends, and a society filled with distractions and vice. Socrates' description of the descent into vice, i.e., the deformity of love, hearkens back to how the lover-beloved practice twisted the focus from virtue to sexual satisfaction: "he surrenders

⁷⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 249e5–250a.

to pleasure and sets out on the manner of a four-footed beast, eager to make babies; and wallowing in vice, he goes after unnatural pleasure too, without a trace of fear or shame.”⁷⁶ The deformed soul with its deformed love descends into vice unaware that his form of love is wrong. Dover reminds Plato’s readers that

Wherever and whenever the homosexual ethos of the Greek world originated, the simple answer to the question, “Why were the Athenians of Plato’s time so fond of homosexual relations?” is “Because their fathers and grandfathers were.” The structure of Athenian society, and in particular the segregation of the sexes, reinforced and maintained this ethos.⁷⁷

There is no rational reason for the sexual component of an “educational” relationship. Similarly, Phaedrus is in love with Lysias’s empty words regarding love for no good reason. Socrates understands that Phaedrus would be better off if he pursued the truth about love and not beautiful sounding speeches about love. On the positive side, Phaedrus is not wallowing in the muck of sweaty brothels, but his attraction is still deformed because what he finds beautiful does not aim at the universal knowledge of Beauty itself. The fact that Phaedrus is seduced by words and not sex is nevertheless a good start for Socrates, who sees the potential for Phaedrus to continue to pursue the best life.

The lover and beloved bask in eros. The love the man and boy share is the same love that is attracted to Beauty itself, but how will the two together begin to recollect the true nature of beauty when they are surrounded by the temptation of flesh?

When they are in bed, the lover’s undisciplined horse has a word to say to the

⁷⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 250e4–251a1.

⁷⁷ Dover, *Plato’s Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3.

charioteer—that after all its sufferings it is entitled to a little fun. Meanwhile, the boy’s bad horse has nothing to say at all, but swelling with desire, confused, hugs the lover and kisses him in delight at his great good will.⁷⁸

The dark horse whispers to the lover’s soul; he wants to run free, now that the object of desire is so close. The dark horse of the beloved reflects the sentiment of his lover, but in a more confused manner. The beloved’s “desire is nearly the same as the lover’s, though weaker: he wants to see, touch, kiss, lie down with him; and of course, as you might expect, he acts on these desires soon after they occur.”⁷⁹ The beloved has not developed the awareness and consequent restraint of his appetites. He does not understand that his appetitive horse needs restraint.

Luckily, the soul is not a slave to such passions. Socrates reminds Phaedrus that, “whenever they are lying together [the dark horse] is completely unable, for its own part, to deny the lover any favor he might beg to have. Its yokemate, however, along with its charioteer, *resists such requests with modesty and reason.*”⁸⁰ The noble horse is the seat of virtue. Reason understands what the right thing to do is, but only with the aid of the spirited part of the soul is it able to put it into practice. The more erotic passion or divine madness a lover has, the more self-control he will need to restrain his physical desires. Erotic passion is not inherently evil, but it must be subdued with the virtue of self-control in order for the soul to ascend to the heights of human existence:

Now if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds, which lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of

⁷⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 255e5–8.

⁷⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 255e.

⁸⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 256a4–6. Italics mine.

bliss and shared understanding. They are modest and fully in control of themselves now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into the soul and set free the part that gave it virtue. [...] After death, when they have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first of three rounds in these, the true Olympic contests. There is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man.⁸¹

A lover is most happy when his beloved also begins to take part in the activity of passionate love; both the boy's and the man's wings grow stronger. Socrates notes that, "their lives are bright and happy as they travel together, and thanks to their lives they will grow wings together when the time comes."⁸² Life is good because together they are free to ascend with their loving partners, accountable to each other for virtue and knowledge, harnessing divine madness with self-control. The advantage for the beloved is not just in the mortal realm, but the immortal one as well. A life well-lived means the soul is strong enough to join the divine procession once it has been released from the body. The released soul easily rises to the heavens and returns to his heavenly father, Zeus, whose procession leads the soul as chariot to the heavenly heights so it may partake of the nourishing and enlightening Forms.

Limiting the power of the appetites through moderation is key to ascent. Through the prayer to Pan, Socrates reminds Phaedrus how crucial is self-control in order to master the self and pursue wisdom: "Grant that I may be beautiful (*καλῶ*) inside. [...] May I consider the wise man rich. As for gold, let me have as much as a moderate man

⁸¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 256b.

⁸² Plato *Phaedrus* 256d7–e2.

could bear and carry with him.”⁸³ The gold mentioned in the prayer is the “spiritual riches” at stake, and Socrates hopes that Phaedrus now begins to see how valuable wisdom is compared to speeches.⁸⁴ If “friends have everything in common,” then perhaps Phaedrus will share in Socrates’ philosophical eros, which fueled their day together and strengthened the wings of their souls through recollection.⁸⁵ On the role of beauty in the prayer to Pan, T.G. Rosenmeyer argues that:

The use of the adjective *καλός*—where one might expect *σοφός* or at least *φιλόσοφος*—serves notice that the prayer, like the dialogue of which it is the conclusion, emphasizes the aesthetic aspect of the *λόγος*, and that means, among other things, its communicability and persuasiveness. If they had no beauty, the products of the philosophic mind would remain hoards, buried in the house of learning, instead of being converted into the living currency of significant thought.⁸⁶

Rosenmeyer’s understanding of “beauty” coincides with Socrates’ speeches as *pharmaka* or “love potions.” Beauty for Rosenmeyer means rhetorical charm, i.e., the dialogue’s *psychagogic* appeal. The speeches charm the listener because they play on myths and ideas familiar to the audience while simultaneously adding a philosophical twist that hopefully inspires self-reflection. The speeches are beautiful because they guide the listeners toward philosophical thinking, and, as such, toward recognizing the form of Beauty itself as the source of all beauty in the sensible world. The speeches are beautiful

⁸³ Plato *Phaedrus* 279b8–c2.

⁸⁴ Griswold 1986, 226.

⁸⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 279c.

⁸⁶ T.G. Rosenmeyer, “Plato’s Prayer to Pan (*Phaedrus* 279B8–C3)” in *Hermes*, 90 (1962), 33–44, 44.

on many levels—appealing to those on each rung of the ladder of love. Engaging in philosophical thinking and self-reflection, each person ascends at his or her own pace based on disposition, current state of the soul, and perhaps even the quality of his or her dialectical partners. With all this individual variation, however, the goal remains the same.

Plato provides many examples of the individual variation of possible ascent towards the goal of wisdom in his dialogues, including Phaedrus, Alcibiades, and Socrates. For example, in Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades refers to the golden god of Socrates' soul that is hidden underneath his rough exterior. Socrates' soul is golden—beautiful, rich in wisdom, and precious to Athens.⁸⁷ Socrates tells Alcibiades that “you seem to want more than your proper share: you offer me the merest appearance of beauty, and in return you want the thing itself, ‘gold in exchange for bronze.’”⁸⁸ Socrates cannot give Alcibiades a beautiful soul, rather he provides a beautiful environment for Alcibiades and Phaedrus to manifest the virtues they lack. As Sheffield says, “intellectual intercourse with Socrates is productive of, or at least conducive to, the attainment of wisdom.”⁸⁹ For Alcibiades, Socrates is only a crafty magician, and he wants the tricks for his own.⁹⁰ He cannot see beyond Socrates' erotic charm to the ultimate purpose of loving wisdom, so he is unable to climb higher on the ladder of love. Socrates does not provide the instant gratification that comes with a sophist's power of persuasion. The sophist is certain that an image of beauty is Beauty itself. By contrast, Socrates is never so certain. He is instead the *daimōnic* messenger between potential philosophers and wisdom. He is

⁸⁷ Plato *Symposium* 216a5–217a1, 218e6, 220d1–5.

⁸⁸ Plato *Symposium* 218e.

⁸⁹ Sheffield 2009, 96.

⁹⁰ Plato *Symposium* 217e–218b.

the spirit of eros that cultivates a beautiful environment to open one's soul and peep within.

With Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*, Plato inverts the common meaning of eros, as well as the consequences of the socially accepted lover-beloved relationship. When does love turn from physical eros to philosophical eros? What is the role of reason in turning away from lower desires to higher desires, with their corresponding higher pleasures? Moral education trains the soul to rely on reason to govern; virtue is pursuing excellence; love is the ascent toward the Good. But ultimately, educators cannot force someone to love learning. They can inspire and create a beautiful environment, but they cannot change the object of desire for the students. Education is an active ascent on the part of the student. The role of the philosopher as midwife is to nurture lovers who actively choose to give birth in beauty, to create and produce (pro-create) thoughtful reflections of themselves and the world around them.⁹¹

Socrates criticizes the conventional *erastēs-erōmenos* (lover-beloved) relationship of his fellow symposiasts because it creates a duality between education and eroticism; it affirms images of virtue and not true virtue. The educational-erotic relationship should not reflect the duality of perceived reality: corporeal and incorporeal, sensible and intelligible, image and Forms. Rather, the educational-erotic should reflect the ladder of love: one ultimate aim that undergoes a gradual process of transformation that grows closer and closer to Beauty itself. Socrates tells Alcibiades that with age comes the ability

⁹¹ Socrates is described as a midwife, which aids the argument that the soul is ultimately a self-mover, even if it needs a push in the correct direction to ease its ascent. Socrates delivers the ideas from the soul in the same way that another person frees the cave-dweller from his prison. "For I have this in common with the midwives: [...] I am, then, not at all a wise person myself, nor have I any wise invention, the offspring born of my own soul [...]. And it is clear that they do this, not because they have ever learned anything from me, but because *they have found in themselves many fair things and have brought them forth*. But the delivery is due to the god and me." (Plato *Theaetetus* 150c–d, italics mine).

to control physical eros, or at least it should. Is this not the assumption that fuels the notion that the lover provides the best education to his beloved? Socrates says, “The mind’s sight becomes sharp only when the body’s eyes go past their prime—and you are still a good long time away from that.”⁹² Socrates asks Alcibiades why he (Socrates) should love him when he (Alcibiades) had nothing to offer him as far as the state of his soul is concerned. Philosophy is a high stakes activity because what is at stake is the soul. So, it is important for us to understand the role of the body versus the role of the mind, especially in the realm of philosophical erotics.

Alcibiades—in his unrestrained eros—seems more like Pan than Socrates. Pan takes what he wants, sometimes through deception, sometimes through violent aggression, and then is happy to sit and play his pipes when the chase is over, not regretting the harm he caused others (and his own soul). Alcibiades was not able to reflect on his own “Pan” nature in such a way that would transform his eros into one that was philosophically attuned. But, is Pan only base and vulgar? Socrates is often depicted as a randy and flirtatious figure, but his eros is focused on wisdom, whereas Alcibiades never expands his lower nature into a higher one. Again, the role reversal of Socrates depicted as the animalistic and vulgar satyr only highlights Alcibiades’ failure to recognize how lower desire attracts him to a life filled with images of virtue and not true virtue. He is attracted to Socrates’ soul, but tries to seduce him physically. Alcibiades is the empty satyr; there are no gods within his hollow frame.

So, how does Socrates as satyr open up the sluice-gates of the soul? Belfiore concludes that Plato depicts Socrates as Eros, Pan, and satyr in *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*

⁹² Plato *Symposium* 219a2–4.

because “Socrates, like them, has daimonic qualities,”⁹³ which are present in all human souls. The *daimōnic* is necessary to produce “psychic harmony” that allows humans to ascend to the heavenly realm.⁹⁴ Recognizing the goat-like within unlocks the possibility to reflect on the divine within by practicing the *daimōnic* skill of dialectical reasoning. Self-motion is made possible through examining the self and choosing to rule it with reason. We must recognize the Pan in us in order to see the Zeus-like within. We are satyrs before we are gods; we are lovers before we are lovers of wisdom. Without recognizing the dark horse of our soul, we will not take the proper steps to tame it. The *Homeric Hymn* to Pan continues:

At that hour the clear-voiced nymphs are with him and move with nimble feet,
singing by some spring of dark water, while Echo wails about the mountaintop,
and the god on this side or on that of the choirs, or at times sidling into the midst,
plies it nimbly with his feet.⁹⁵

Socrates as Pan plays the pipes of charming speeches to entice the youth to get their souls moving in time to the harmony of Beauty itself. Plato echoes the song of Socrates in his dialogues, which is really the chorus of the Forms, as both dance nimbly to the beat and invite the reader to dance along *daimōnically*.

4.3 *Erōmenos* and the “Spring that Feeds the Stream:” Phaedrus as Ganymede

Winding down his palinode under the *platon* tree and next to the stream, Socrates emphasizes the benefits of divine madness for the beloved within the context of the lover-

⁹³ Belfiore 2012, 263.

⁹⁴ Belfiore 2012, 263.

⁹⁵ Homer *Homeric Hymns* 19:14–20.

beloved relationship. The play on the lover-beloved relationship illuminates how Socrates' description of the nature of the tripartite soul corresponds to the necessary function of eros for the soul to ascend to the divine banquet, recollecting Beauty through participating in philosophical discussions all along the way. Plato uses the intersection of myth and philosophical eros to lead the soul toward the Form of Beauty itself.

The dialogue shifts in focus to the boy's reaction to the lover's divine madness. The lover's desire is likened to a cup that overflows: "the spring that feeds the stream Zeus named 'Desire' (ἰμερον) when he was in love with Ganymede begins to flow mightily in the lover and is partly absorbed by him, and when he is filled it overflows and runs away outside him."⁹⁶ Socrates alludes to the "project of dialectic in the metaphor of masculine insemination of a partner's soul."⁹⁷ The mythological figures of Zeus and Ganymede reflect both the lover-beloved relationship and the individual's introduction to philosophical erotics. Zeus and the young mortal Ganymede together are the "gods" presiding over the lover-beloved relationship. Zeus spies a boy tending his flock, which, like the mention of Pan, reminds one of the pastoral themes in the dialogue. The boy surpasses all others in his youthful beauty. Zeus transforms into a winged creature, which parallels the reference to the soul as a phallus-bird. Zeus takes wings in order to descend to earth and scoop up the beautiful youth, ascending with him again into the heavens. After Zeus—in the form of an eagle—carries off Ganymede, he becomes Zeus's cupbearer and sexual companion.⁹⁸ Zeus preserved the youth's beauty by making

⁹⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 255c.

⁹⁷ Gellrich 1994, 287.

⁹⁸ "Tros, who was lord of the Trojans, [had] three sons unfaulted, Ilos (Ilus) and Assarakos (Assaracus) and godlike Ganymedes who was the loveliest born of the race of mortals, and therefore the gods caught him

Ganymede the immortal wine-bearer of the stars as the constellation Aquarius, with Aquila the eagle and Crater the serving bowl not far from his side. Ganymede's beauty will never fade.

The story of Zeus and Ganymede illuminates both the virtue and vice of the lover-beloved relationship. The interpretation of the Ganymede passage is twofold. The first interpretation is the more literal sense of the "spring" that erupts from desire as an allusion to the sexual fluids during the lover's climax. This reflects the physical relationship between and the erotic component of the lover-beloved relationship. The second interpretation is in the more abstract sense of the "spring that feeds" sexual desire represents divine madness. This reflects the educational component of the lover-beloved relationship. Zeus becomes obsessed with the boy, kidnaps him, and presumably rapes him. Zeus desires that the boy's beauty never fade, so he grants him immortality. Both parts of the story reflect different aspects of the lover-beloved relationship: one is overtly sexual and selfish, the other concerned with the soul, i.e., educational. One seeks sexual gratification from the boy's body; the other seeks the well being of the boy's soul through dialectical education.

Socrates inverts the cultural norm: the erotic-educational relationship should not practice physical eroticism, but philosophical erotics. The imagery from the above "spring" passage emphasizes Zeus's imperfection in his obsession with the beautiful young boy.⁹⁹ In this case, the topic of "sexual desire" or *himeros* arises. Socrates graphically describes the pain the soul undergoes as its wings grow, likening it to a

away to themselves, to be Zeus's wine-pourer, for the sake of his beauty, so he might be among the immortals" (Homer *Iliad* 20.232, trans. Lattimore).

⁹⁹ Cf. *Republic* Book X where Socrates critiques poetry/mythology because it justifies vice.

child's first teeth bursting through the gums.¹⁰⁰ The only thing that eases the pain is the sight of the beloved in all his beauty. Socrates explains that the soul

swells up and aches and tingles as it grows [wings]. But when it looks upon the beauty of the boy and takes in the stream of particles flowing into it from his beauty (that is why it is called “desire [ἰμερος]”), when it is watered and warmed by this, then all the pain subsides and is replaced with joy.¹⁰¹

According to Liddell and Scott, love as *himeros* is “longing, yearning after; a yearning after tears, i.e. a desire of the soul to disburden itself in grief; *desire, love.*”¹⁰²

The connotation of this type of desire is a mix of pleasure and pain—a release from pain. The god *Himeros* is in contrast to the gods *Eros* and *Anteros*. According to Hesiod, both *Himeros* and *Eros* were present at *Aphrodite's* birth.¹⁰³ Sometimes *Eros* is depicted with a twin, *Anteros*, or requited love.¹⁰⁴ Each of these *Erotes* is mentioned in *Phaedrus* as Socrates and *Phaedrus* examine the experience of love for the beloved, the *erōmenos*. Thus *himeros* is understood as the painful desire the beloved's beauty causes the lover as the sexual tension mounts; it is unrequited or unconsummated lust. Reeve describes the etymology of the word to explain Socrates' description of visual beauty as it actively works upon the passive eyes of the lover. Reeve notes that *merē* means “particles,” *ienai* means “go,” and *rhein* means “flow.”¹⁰⁵ In *Cratylus*, Socrates explains the etymology of

¹⁰⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 251c5–d.

¹⁰¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 251c5–d.

¹⁰² Liddell and Scott 1889, 380.

¹⁰³ Hesiod *Theogony* 201, trans. Evelyn-White. “And with her [*Aphrodite*] went *Eros*, and comely *Himeros* (*Desire*) followed her at her birth at the first and as she went into the assembly of the gods.” Also, in line 176 ἰμερον is used to describe the “longing for love” that *Ouranos* had for *Gaia* before copulating with her.

¹⁰⁴ *Aphrodite* is mentioned twice in *Phaedrus*, both times in connection with *Eros*. In the *Symposium* *Aphrodite* is mentioned in *Pausanias's* speech, much like *himeros* and *anteros* are here differentiated into two dual natures: Common and Higher *Aphrodite* (Plato *Symposium* 180d).

¹⁰⁵ Reeve 2006, 116.

himeros differently:

The name ἵμερος (longing) was given to the stream (ῥοῦς) which most draws the soul; for because it flows with a rush (ἰέμενος) and with a desire for things and thus draws the soul on through the impulse of its flowing, all this power gives it the name of ἵμερος. And the word πόθος (yearning) signifies that it pertains not to that which is present, but to that which is elsewhere (ἄλλοθί που) or absent, and therefore the same feeling which is called ἵμερος when its object is present, is called πόθος when it is absent. And ἔρως (love) is so called because it flows in (ἔσσει) from without, and this flowing is not inherent in him who has it, but is introduced through the eyes.¹⁰⁶

Whereas Reeve points to the literal interpretation of ἰέμενος as the particles of the beloved's beauty flowing into the eyes of the lover causing a painful desire, Socrates in *Cratylus* points to the lover's desire as a powerful stream that rushes over him, reflecting the "spring that feeds" in the above passage.

The etymology of Ganymede is significant because it points to the double meaning of the myth. "The boy's name Γανυμήδης is derived from the word *ganumai*, meaning "to brighten up, to make bright, be glad or happy," is used in Plato's *Phaedrus* at 234d3 when Socrates notes that reading Lysias's "speech made [Phaedrus] radiant with delight (γάνυσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου)."¹⁰⁷ The source of Phaedrus's joy is speeches. He is in love with speeches, feels an attraction to speeches more than to anything else, and in

¹⁰⁶ Plato *Cratylus* 419b–420b.

¹⁰⁷ Liddell and Scott 1889, 160.

the presence of speeches is in all his radiant glory. Phaedrus's love of speeches is comparable to the lover's love of the beloved. A speech is passive, however; it cannot, in itself and by itself, provide love. It can quickly satisfy the lover's craving, though. Griswold notes that "Phaedrus shines (*ganusthai*; 234d3) while reading, perhaps putting quite a bit of expression into his voice [...] Phaedrus' delight is an egocentric revelry in the repetition of 'truths' he unreflectively holds dear."¹⁰⁸ For Phaedrus, hearing a speech brightens his day in the same way as seeing one's beloved. Plato uses the analogy of eros and brightness when referring to both Phaedrus and the lover-beloved relationship and the potential to move from darkness to light.¹⁰⁹ Once the lover and beloved have learned to control their physical desires and hone their mutual love of wisdom in friendship, "their lives are bright and happy as they travel together, and thanks to their love they will grow wings together when the time comes."¹¹⁰ Could the cause of Phaedrus's radiance be compared to *himeros*? Phaedrus is made radiant by passively listening to speeches in the same way that the lovesick *erastēs* is relieved of pain, his mood "lightened," by beauty particles entering his eyes.

Who is made happy by the lover-beloved relationship? Whom does the star-bright Ganymede brighten—Zeus or Ganymede? Zeus, of course, is gladdened by the presence of his beloved.¹¹¹ Ganymede's name "becoming *catamitus* in Latin, has given English the word *catamite*, meaning the passive object of male homosexual lust."¹¹² Ganymede's beautiful body provides sexual stimulation and satisfaction for Zeus. Ganymede also

¹⁰⁸ Griswold 1986, 52.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*.

¹¹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 256d–256e2.

¹¹¹ In 1610 Galileo discovered the brightest and largest of Jupiter's four satellites, which was named Ganymede in the mid-nineteenth century.

¹¹² Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition, New York: 2012), 94.

brightens those in his presence as a beautiful wine-bearer brightens any festive occasion. In contrast, Ganymede himself is brightened by being immortalized in the constellation Aquarius, as well as brightening the night sky with his beauty.

Many later thinkers, including the poet Goethe, interpret the myth as an uplifting tale of spiritual ascent to the divine.¹¹³ One could corroborate the spiritual interpretation of Zeus in *Phaedrus* through Plato's charioteer myth. The gods have two noble horses, and thus do not experience the struggle toward the divine banquet, nor do they fear losing control of the chariot and falling from heaven. Zeus, as the leader of the procession, represents the ultimate guide to Forms. Yet, the spiritual meaning of the Homeric Ganymede myth is often superseded by the much more shocking interpretation of the rape of a boy by the greatest of all gods. In this case, Zeus represents the human *erastēs* as possessed by divine madness. He descends due to his erotic attraction to the boy. Ganymede, his beloved, is taken unawares as he tends his flock in the pasture; he is as innocent as a lamb, as unaware of the danger as one taken to the slaughter. Zeus rapes the young boy, and keeps him as his cupbearer.

As we have seen, rape is a recurring theme in *Phaedrus*. Gellrich notes that the myth in the palinode is “haunted by the overtones of a sexual assault described in the first exchange of the dialogue” near their resting place on the banks of the river Ilissus.¹¹⁴ Oreithuia, who was playing with her friend Pharmaceia, was chased and abducted by Boreas, winged god of the North Wind. Oreithuia was the daughter of Erechtheus, the

¹¹³ I come, I come! / Whither, ah whither? / Upwards! Strive upwards! The clouds drift / Down, yielding / To yearning love, / To me! To me! / In your lap / Upwards, / Embracing and embraced! / Upwards to your bosom, / All-loving father! (Goethe, *Selected Poetry of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, ed. and trans. David Luke (New York: Penguin Classics, 2005), 8–9.)

¹¹⁴ Gellrich 1994, 286.

king of Athens, and unlike most rape myths, she becomes Boreas's immortal wife, nymph of mountain winds, and mother of Thracian twins who grew their father's wings upon puberty.¹¹⁵ Ovid relays that, "as their cheeks grew yellow down, so, like a bird, wings lapped them on each side."¹¹⁶ Phaedrus led Socrates to the *platon* tree and asked Socrates if this was the place of the rape. Athenians were attracted to this specific assault because, as Keuls notes, "the myth's patriotic flavor made it the most popular rape story in the pictorial arts," especially since Athena and Erechtheus are usually depicted as watching over approvingly as the events unfold.¹¹⁷

Zeus is usually depicted as the "master rapist."¹¹⁸ Although *Phaedrus* begins with an infamous local rape not by the master rapist himself, the Boreas-Oreithuia myth foreshadows the Zeus-Ganymede myth. Oreithuia's friend was Pharmaceia, a nymph of a poisonous well, also resided near Illisus. She is a reference to the *pharmakon* of *logos*, i.e., speeches as love potions, which are Phaedrus's "best friends." Phaedrus as Ganymede-Oreithuia is continually placed in the passive role as a beloved, i.e., dominated by the pursuing lover represented by Zeus or Boreas, respectively. Boreas and Zeus as eagle both have wings, and Boreas's sons grow wings much as Ganymede is transformed into a celestial constellation. The significance of these mythological parallels is that Phaedrus is playing a specific role in the Athenian lover-beloved scene, and the results can be just as dark as these violent myths. Even if Phaedrus eludes sexual assault, the state of his soul is at risk. Sophistic *pharmakon* degrades the soul as a means of

¹¹⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), 6: 658–721.

¹¹⁶ Ovid 1958, 152.

¹¹⁷ Keuls 1993, 52.

¹¹⁸ Keuls 1993, 47–51.

domination in the Athenian social hierarchy.

Much like Charmides' threat to Socrates, Phaedrus hints that if Socrates does not give a speech he will assault him. Socrates refers to Lysias as Phaedrus's "beloved," which points to the role reversal by which Phaedrus is already bound. Phaedrus exclaims, "Get it into your head that we shall not leave here until you recite what you claimed to have 'in your breast.' We are alone, in a deserted place, and I am younger and stronger. From all this 'take my meaning' and don't make me force you to speak when you can do so willingly."¹¹⁹ Phaedrus is not able to control his love of speeches. It is as if he is forcing Socrates to do something with which he is uncomfortable, and yet it gives Phaedrus pleasure. The dark undertones of rape are present here as they are in all discussion of the lover-beloved relationship. Also, in the way Socrates mimics Lysias's speech, he is taking on the role of non-lover in terms of speechmaking because it is as if Socrates, like Lysias, was not "very interested in it."¹²⁰

Zeus, aware that the kidnapping and rape were wrong, sends Ganymede's father, Tros, a pair of divine horses as reparation.¹²¹ Like the phallus-bird, horses also have a lustful connotation with which Socrates plays. Belfiore explains that "the horse is an erotic symbol in Greek literature, representing both lover and beloved."¹²² The pair of horses given by Zeus parallels the pair of horses the gods possess in the charioteer analogy. In the Homeric myth of Ganymede, Zeus gives a mortal this precious gift of horses to ease a father's suffering, and immortality to Ganymede in exchange for his duty

¹¹⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 236c6.

¹²⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 235a4.

¹²¹ Homer *Homeric Hymns*, "To Aphrodite" V.200–215. Ganymede is also mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10:152–161 and Virgil's *Aeneid* 5:252–257.

¹²² Belfiore 2012, 257. For an excellent article on the use of horses in the ancient Greeks see "Horsepower and Donkeywork: Equids and the Ancient Greek Imagination" by Mark Griffith in *Classical Philology* (Vol. 101 No. 4 2006, 307–358.)

to beauty. In the Platonic myth, the horses represent, on one side of the scale, the dark part of the soul that has an unseemly *himeros*, a lust that resists control, and on the other side of the scale, the noble part of the soul that is obedient to reason as *anteros*. *Himeros* and *anteros* represent the traditional roles of the tripartite soul: *himeros* is the appetitive part of the soul. *Himeros* represents the appetitive part of the *erastēs* as he takes sexual pleasure in the body of the obedient beloved.

To treat a child as a commodity in such a way by exchanging goods and services for sexual companionship is more than disdainful, it is disgusting. In fact, in Plato's *Laws*, the Athenians accuse the Cretans of inventing the story of Zeus and Ganymede in order to "plead his example for their indulgence in this pleasure too."¹²³ Socrates is working against the same cultural norm—present in the Athens of history, even if absent from the Athens of Plato's last dialogue—in order to shape the best educational model that is most advantageous for the soul and city. To do this he rewrites mythology to express the idea of philosophical eros. The Zeus in the Homeric Ganymede myth has little to do with Socrates' charioteer myth. In Socrates' myth, Zeus is the leader of the procession to the divine banquet. Why does Socrates use this myth to refer to the experience of love for the beloved?

The lover-beloved relationship reeks of rape. It is pederasty, the erotic love of children. It is also where pedagogy (παιδαγωγέω) originates: *pais*, *paidos* (παῖς, παιδός) means "boy" or "youth" and *agogos* means to "lead" or "guide." Pedagogy is leading a child's soul or shaping the mind of a child. The lover-beloved relationship is both erotic and educational. In theory it is supposed to cultivate the soul of the boy, who

¹²³ Plato *Laws* 636c, trans. A.E. Taylor.

will be a virtuous and happy citizen, but somehow it became tainted with sex. The imagery Socrates uses in his speeches is erotic, but the erotic attraction to the body is redirected to an erotic attraction to Beauty (and the Good) during the philosophical discussions on love (and various topics). Most youth feel the burning, yearning attraction to beautiful bodies. What Socrates does is construct speeches that play on the likes and dislikes of his audience in order to instigate critical reflection on why they feel those sensations, whether their attraction has a greater purpose, and how they want to live their lives. Socrates takes the sex out of education because this only trains the youths to care about physical matters and lower pleasures; what truly counts is cultivating a virtuous, contemplative soul. Philosophical erotics cares for the soul through passionate dialectics. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates is attempting to seduce Phaedrus's mind to fall in love with his second speech, so that by the end Socrates can instill a radically different value from the cultural norm: the love of wisdom that improves the soul. After the speech, Socrates and Phaedrus have a lengthy discussion, which is the most important part of the educational process because it strengthens the soul and inspires more philosophical questions as more puzzles arise.

There is a link between Ganymede and Phaedrus. Like Ganymede's name, Phaedrus's name (φαῖδρος) means bright and beaming. Phaedrus is brightened by exposure to *logos*, as well as brightening Athens with his speeches.¹²⁴ Socrates takes Phaedrus's "brightening" as a step in the right direction, but not the end of the philosophical journey of the soul. Much like the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, Phaedrus is no longer chained by ignorance. His eyes are drawn to a brightness he has

¹²⁴ Plato *Symposium* 178a. Phaedrus is the first to give a speech eulogizing Eros at the symposium.

never encountered in his life, and they are gradually filling with that brightness.

Phaedrus's love of *logos* points to the progress of his soul. He is not in love with a specific body or with any physical object for that matter. He has potential, but in order for him to progress to the next level of learning, he must see the drawback of beautiful speeches: they do not necessarily provide a rational account or truth of their subject. Werner affirms this when he explains that Socrates' use of myth in the palinode gives Phaedrus the potential to think philosophically because the "images of myth, like the images of beauty, have their direct impact on us," even if that impact is on an "unconscious level, without our taking an active role in the process."¹²⁵ Although our passions are ignited by the images, Werner sates that "such stirrings—even though accompanied by metaphysical reminiscences—do not yet amount to *philosophical* activity."¹²⁶ The stirrings are the preparation of the beautiful environment that is necessary to give birth to true virtue.¹²⁷ To love speeches for speeches' sake is a good start, but ultimately it misses the mark. It does not matter how excellent a teacher Socrates is; if Phaedrus cannot actively engage the ideas through discursive reasoning, then he will not ascend any further towards Forms.

Another connection exists between the importance of vision and the analogy of ascent like a bird, reinforcing the lesson of the cave analogy. When a bird learns to use his wings, his visual perspective changes drastically. The grounded bird uses his vision to see the world and peer up into the faraway sky. The bird in flight possesses a breadth of

¹²⁵ Werner 2012, 106.

¹²⁶ Werner 2012, 106.

¹²⁷ Plato *Symposium* 206c1–3; 212a3–6.

vision unknown to groundlings.¹²⁸ Much like the bird, Ganymede transforms from shepherd to constellation as Zeus guides him. “Combining sight and reason, astronomy becomes a means of elevation,” Miller writes, “a process that purifies both.”¹²⁹ From above, Ganymede can see much more and understand the world below in a more complete way, as well as have access to the heavens. Socrates desires Phaedrus to grow his wings through philosophical activity. Phaedrus as a lover of wisdom (versus speeches) is in a “purer” state and as such can understand the world from a grander perspective, like Ganymede in his incorporeal, purer constellation form.

A philosophical erotic harnesses passion for learning, but the process of ascent must continue with the aim of Beauty itself for the love of wisdom, not getting stuck along the way. Phaedrus has the potential to ascend, but he also might get stuck in his love of speeches. Socrates’ goal in this dialogue is to help Phaedrus ascend towards Beauty itself. That is one reason the dialogue does not end after the three speeches are given, but continues with a dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus about the nature and aim of speeches and speech making. *Logos* benefits both of them, but Phaedrus has the most to gain from further analysis because he is at a pivotal point in the awakening of his soul. It is *thinking* about speeches, not the speeches themselves, which he needs in order to begin loving properly. If one did not love speeches, though, there would not be the possibility for discussing speeches in an intellectually stimulating manner.

The passage on the overflow of eros in the lover explains that when the lover’s capacity to hold divine madness has reached its limit, the overflow “runs outside him”

¹²⁸ I am using this word with Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in mind—those of us without wings have the “cheap seats” below the stage of reality.

¹²⁹ Miller 2011, 96.

and presumably into the *erōmenos*. Unlike the lover, the boy is not overcome with erotic passion at first sight; however, the abundance of desire reaches the boy, who now shares in divine madness to a lesser extent. The overflow passage mirrors the description of the setting at the beginning of the dialogue: “From under the plane tree the loveliest spring runs with very cool water—our feet can attest to that.”¹³⁰ Both Socrates and Phaedrus are testing the waters of desire through charming speeches. Socrates’ second speech is the most satisfying because it points to a greater truth rather than confirming *conventional understanding of love*.

In the same way that Socrates has honed his thinking skills, so he understands how to appeal to Phaedrus’s interest to get him thinking about speeches instead of just listening and giving them. The lover begins the process of erotic ascent, but the beloved has most to gain. The beloved is necessary as the beauty that inspires love, but he is not the source of the love, properly speaking. The interplay of active and passive forces confirms the traditional roles within the lover-beloved relationship. The boy is the passive recipient of the man’s active love in the same way the lover’s desire becomes the beloved’s desire. It is seen as unbecoming if a boy makes sexual advances on a man.¹³¹ Where a lover experiences *eros*, the beloved experiences *philia*.¹³² Therefore, the source of erotic passion is the lover, not the beloved.

Without seeing the potential in Phaedrus—the beauty of a young mind filled with

¹³⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 230b.

¹³¹ Xenophon states that “a boy does not even share the man’s enjoyment of sexual intercourse as a woman does: he is a sober person watching one drunk with sexual excitement” (*Conversations of Socrates*, 8.21, 261).

¹³² Luc Brisson, “Paiderestia, Philosophia” in *Plato’s Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenistic Studies, 2006), 234. He continues that “an older man, inspired by love, pursued with his advances a younger man who, if he yielded, was led to do so out of affection, gratitude, and admiration, feelings that were grouped together under the term *philia*; an honorable *erōmenos* should not seek pleasure in his case” (Brisson 2006, 234).

passionate stirring—Socrates would never have given the two speeches nor discussed them afterwards. How then does this help the reader understand how the beloved begins to experience love? Socrates explains that the beginning of love in the beloved is like when a “breeze or an echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source.”¹³³ The beauty of the boy flows from the beloved to the eyes of the lover and “the stream of beauty goes back to the beautiful boy and sets him aflutter.”¹³⁴ Beauty “enters through his eyes, which are its natural route to the soul.”¹³⁵ The significance of vision is examined within the context of the physical realm. Socrates then explains that when beauty enters the soul from the physical realm “it waters the passages for the wings, starts the wings growing, and fills the soul of the loved one with love in return.”¹³⁶ Here we see the twofold interpretation of both the physical response to beauty as well as the soul’s response to beauty. They are both the slow, gradual, and painful process of recollecting Beauty itself. The beloved is first the passive recipient of his own beauty. The beloved’s attraction to beauty begins with the erotic response of the lover to the beloved’s own beauty.

In the physical sense, the self is eroticized. The beloved—uncomprehending of what is happening to him or why he seems to have caught this love-sickness—sees himself as an erotic object for the lover and is turned on by his beauty’s power of attraction. The boy does not understand that he “is seeing himself in the lover as in a mirror.”¹³⁷ In the metaphysical sense, the boy is seeing the beauty that participates in

¹³³ Plato *Phaedrus* 255c4.

¹³⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 255c6.

¹³⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 255c7.

¹³⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 255d1–2.

¹³⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 255d6.

Beauty itself for the first time; most significantly, he is seeing that what participates is within himself. The reflection of the beauty of his soul nourishes that same soul as it begins to grow its wings in order to ascend. When the lover is able to control himself properly, he is able to shape how the beloved understands love.

When the beloved is in the company of the lover
the boy's pain is relieved just as the lover's is, and when they are apart he yearns
as much as he is yearned for, because he is the mirror image of love in him—
backlove [ἀντέρως]—though he neither speaks nor thinks of it as love [ἔρωτα],
but as friendship [φιλίαν].¹³⁸

It is actually from experiencing the lover's goodness that the boy realizes that love is not vile, rather divine. The beloved "is amazed by it as he realizes that all the friendship he has from his other friends and relatives put together is nothing compared to that of this friend who is inspired by a god."¹³⁹ The love between lover and beloved is mutual, not asymmetrical as is interpreted by some scholars.¹⁴⁰ "As the relationship develops," Nussbaum remarks, "he recognizes that the loved one is the vehicle of divinity through whom and in whom he follows up traces of the god he himself reveres."¹⁴¹ After uncovering the true nature of the soul that is cloaked under the body, love really begins to deepen into the frenzy of divine madness. Philosophical eros is divine madness because it seeks the divine within without taking anything in return, such as sexual favors. In Socrates' explanation of the four types of divine madness, he refers to a character that is

¹³⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 255d–e.

¹³⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 255b.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Halperin 1990, 268–270.

¹⁴¹ Nussbaum 2002, 72.

similar to Diotima when he talks about the “prophetess of Delphi” as participating in prophetic madness.¹⁴² In *Symposium*, Socrates throws off the rhythm of the previous speeches by interjecting a female voice into the all male lover-beloved mix. Diotima acts as Socrates’ teacher, replacing the aristocratic tradition of the lover-beloved relationship. Diotima is Socrates’ priest-teacher as she reveals the mysteries of the rites of love through a speech, and not a physical seduction as in the lover-beloved relationship about which the other symposiasts speak in their speeches praising eros. A priestess to a boy explains the mysteries of love as it pertains to young boys in the context of the lover-beloved relationship. As a priestess, she is not teaching Socrates how to love her, or even women for that matter. Diotima is a more objective educator as she teaches the young Socrates “the art of love” practiced by “loving boys correctly.”¹⁴³

The role reversal is a measure to lure Socrates’ audience into self-reflection, specifically on the topic of the nature of the erotic-educational relationship as it is practiced among the Athenian elite. As such, the role reversal is similar to Socrates’ first speech in *Phaedrus*, which mimicked Lysias’s poor speech in order to allow Phaedrus to take a more critical look at the speech he loved so much he memorized it. David Halperin explains that this role-reversal reveals what “correct pederasty” aims for— improving the relationship between aristocratic men and boys.¹⁴⁴ “Diotima thereby founds, or re-founds, an important institution in classical Athens,” writes Halperin, “providing at the same time an ideological (philosophical) justification for it.”¹⁴⁵ Why would Socrates choose a woman to instruct men on the proper conduct of the pederastic relationship?

¹⁴² Plato *Phaedrus* 244a.

¹⁴³ Plato *Symposium* 211b5–7.

¹⁴⁴ Halperin 1990, 258.

¹⁴⁵ Halperin 1990, 258.

One plausible reason is that Socrates distances himself from the educational cycle of the lover-beloved relationship in order to show that the “wisest man of Athens” did not become so as a passive recipient of knowledge. Nor is Socrates shaping a new educational model with any sexual ulterior motives, which was prone to happen.¹⁴⁶ The combination of Lysias’s speech recited by Phaedrus, and Socrates’ second speech indicates that the lover-beloved relationship is motivated by eros, but should be dictated by a philosophical eros leading to divine madness. Sexual frenzy should be understood not as a sexual need to be sated, but as an indication that one’s soul is drawing closer to its source.

The lover is content to love his beloved in a mutual respect and thanks for the beloved’s aid in the dialectic, the pursuit of Beauty. For the philosopher, instead of love characterized by *himeros*, asymmetrical lust, it transforms into *anteros*, mutual love. Mutual love involves recognition of the other person as a soul in flux. Plato’s use of *himeros* and *anteros* supports a definition of love as mutual and dialectical in nature. Socrates as teacher provides his student with a philosophical fertile speech and myth. The student either rejects or accepts the efficacy of its ideas, as is the case for Phaedrus. In the end, Phaedrus rejects the self-image of the passive Ganymede of the traditional myth in favor of Socrates’ myth of the celestial Ganymede immortalized in the heavens. The passive beloved of speechmakers memorizes speeches and does not reflect on the ideas contained within, or even why he is attracted to speeches in the first place. The passive beloved takes what is given to him, not discerning whether the gifts bestowed are beneficial to him or not. The active lover of wisdom discusses the ideas contained within

¹⁴⁶ An example is the sophist Lysias’s *erōtikoi logoi* (love speeches) in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (230e5–234c5).

charming speeches, and does so while passionately seeking wisdom as well as self-knowledge.

The *pharmakon* of Socrates' mythmaking transforms myths so as to direct souls to the true object of desire: Beauty itself. The best souls are lovers who take the Forms as their beloved. An active lover of wisdom regains the reins of the soul, while the beloved is beholden to the whims of the horses. Zeus lifts Ganymede to the heavens through enlightening dialectical exchanges, not by carrying a terrified boy away with deadly talons. The Pans and satyrs of Athens can teach the youth the song of Beauty itself as the lovers of wisdom ascend together to the heights—wings grow strong, cicadas hum in harmony, and the horses fall in line with the charioteer through a mutual passion and *daimōnic* pursuit of wisdom.

CONCLUSION

Happy race of birds, that wear
No fleece to fend the winter's air;
Nor can summer's beaming ray
Scorch us through the sultry day.
Bosomed deep in leafy green
Us the flowery meadows screen,
While the shrill cicada cries
Rapt in noontide ecstasies.

— Aristophanes, *Birds*¹

¹Aristophanes refers to cicadas as “the chirpers” or ἀχέτας (1095).

Even on the laziest of summer days when the sun is directly overhead scorching our skulls and the droning of insects fills our ears, the erotic attraction towards Beauty rests latently in the soul, ready to be woken up by a bit of prodding, poking, or stinging by the infamous gadfly of Athens. Socrates understands that cultivating philosophical eros requires a gradual awakening of the hazy mind to open up the novice to willingly engage in sophisticated discussions that elevate self-knowledge. Instead of plopping down an encyclopedic volume on our laps, Socrates starts us off with a glossy magazine that contains vivid images and true articles.² The charming speeches are just the beginning of dialectical ascent reflecting Beauty itself motivated by eros. The image-lover is hooked by the dazzling exterior, and then once intrigued has the potential to begin to transform his love of images into love of wisdom by reading and discussing the articles enfolded within, thus allowing reason to reign.

Humans have the potential to ascend the rungs of the ladder of love toward Beauty itself. The crux to motivating self-ascent is becoming aware of the rung we are presently perched on, and determining what will best prompt us to open our droopy eyes and notice the higher rungs above motivating us to climb to the very top. This dissertation is a climb of sorts, and it is important to recollect where we started from and where we ended up. Chapter 1 focused on the lower rungs of the ladder of love. The setting represents the lowest rungs on the ladder of love as it sets up the soul to see past the physical and into the intelligible—the flirtation between two individuals in its erotic

² The magazine “Vanity Fair” comes to mind. This publication is swathed in celebrity photo shoots by renown portrait photographers, but hidden underneath the shiny pop-culture exterior are excellent models of journalism, perhaps some even life-changing. Socrates plays both roles—the Annie Leibovitz of Athens constructing rhetorically appealing speeches, and the James Wolcott of the agora with his hard hitting philosophical method that seeks to transform the soul.

playfulness promotes the ascent. Socrates listens attentively to Phaedrus' speech as a means of determining his place on the ladder of love. When he understands that Phaedrus has not made it out of the middle rungs of loving customs and traditions by way of speeches, Socrates advances his own charming speech as a kind of lure. Socrates sings a cicada song to inspire divine madness in Phaedrus. Playing with Phaedrus's interest in speeches on love enables Socrates to spark an erotic awakening toward Beauty itself. Unlike the sophists, Socrates' version of persuasion does not entail that Phaedrus concedes that Socrates' speech is correct. The goal of Socrates' *pharmakon* is that Phaedrus cares about the subject and desires to pursue the truth of the matter by using reason. As a *psychagōgue* instilling philosophical eros, Socrates leads Phaedrus's soul in order that Phaedrus will desire to learn how to lead his own soul on the upward journey armed with the love of wisdom aimed at the Forms.

Chapter 2 picked up with Socrates leading Phaedrus's soul to higher rungs on the ladder of love through the palinode, a medicinal speech. Socrates' *pharmaka* are speeches imbued with myths that open up the possibility for a focused discussion on the role of rhetoric and speeches in caring for the soul. When Phaedrus said, "let's talk," he showed that he was at least willing to try to climb from speech-loving to a higher rung.³ The rung above loving customs and speeches is that of loving knowledge, in this case knowledge concerning rhetoric, speeches, writing, and the soul; if he recollects correctly, the attraction to the beauty of speeches will transform to an attraction to the beauty of all knowledge and continue to drive his ascent. Chapter 3 discussed how Socrates' interlocutors must move themselves up the ladder of love from their own philosophical

³ Plato *Phaedrus* 259d6.

eros; wisdom is not attained by being pushed all the way up the ladder of love. Chapter 4 examined the interplay of the roles of lover and beloved, contrasting the traditional roles with the way the lover and beloved are presented in Socrates' speeches. The fact that traditionally the lover is the active and the beloved acts in the passive role illuminates the misdirected educational model that Socrates criticizes. Socrates employs role-reversals to highlight the pedagogical difference between his own charming speeches evoking philosophical eros and those of the sophists evoking persuasion and mimicry. Socrates plays on Phaedrus' desires not to instigate a lover-beloved relationship where Socrates is the active member and Phaedrus the passive, rather to inspire the philosophical eros within Phaedrus so that he is able to "turn on" his own soul toward intellectual pursuits. This is the only way Phaedrus will move himself from the middle rungs to the highest rung on the ladder of love, recollecting Beauty itself.

Say Your Prayers: The Theuth and Thamus Myth

The prayers scattered throughout *Phaedrus* represent a final reminder of Socrates' charming *psychagōgia*. The mention of a potion at the beginning of *Phaedrus* foreshadows the end of the dialogue, when Socrates criticizes writing using the myth of Theuth and Thamus. The gift of writing is a "potion for memory and wisdom" provided by Theuth.⁴ Thamus understands that writing itself is not a magical cure for ignorance, rather "it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing."⁵ The potion is actually an elixir for forgetfulness; writing is the "appearance of wisdom" and not

⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 274e6.

⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 275a

wisdom itself.⁶ Socrates likens a written work to paintings, which will “stand there as if alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent.”⁷ Similarly, a book may have the appearance of wisdom in between the lines, but it is not wise itself. A written discourse is not wise because it cannot “defend itself” or provide more reasons to support its claims.⁸ In this sense, writing is another dead image that is likened to Lysias’s speech hidden under Phaedrus’s cloak: ultimately impotent. A philosopher can defend her writing when challenged, but she does not place utmost value on the writings themselves. Instead, this honor goes to the pursuit of knowledge that serves as a recollection (means) to her true motivation (end), Beauty itself.⁹ The person who values writing above all else and “spends long hours twisting it around, pasting parts together and taking them apart” is a poet, speech writer, or legislator, not a lover of wisdom. To confuse the means (writing as a substitute for recollection) as the end (recollection of the Forms) is a confused and ultimately impotent task because the nature of the goal that one is working towards is unclear.¹⁰

In yet another instance of mythmaking for the sake of inspiring self-reflection, here Socrates is likening Phaedrus to Theuth, and Socrates to Thamus. Theuth believes he has found the solution to the world’s problems, which are really Phaedrus’s problem of wanting access to all speeches all the time. Thamus instructs Theuth that he has not found a salvific potion, rather a poison for the mind. Instead of writing acting as a saving potion, it poisons the youth like Phaedrus into believing they know something when

⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 275a5.

⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 275d5–6.

⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 275e5.

⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 278c, 152.

¹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 278d–e, 152.

actually they do not. Socrates says, in the voice of Thamus, that Theuth's invention will "enable [students] to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine they know they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing."¹¹ The purpose of writing is to remind the person who already knows and understands the topic, not for someone who is new to it.¹²

Socrates' critique of writing makes the reader of Plato's dialogues uneasy, as it should.¹³ Plato is reminding us that we are reading about the benefits of dialectical reasoning, and are not actually participating in it. It is as if he is cautioning us not to fall prey to the comforting notion that all answers lie in books. The speeches of *Phaedrus* are the potion that induces the labor of dialogue, with Socratic elenchus as the midwife of self-movers, coaching the birth of dialogue.¹⁴ "Myth is but a step toward understanding," Asmis asserts, because "it needs to be complemented by rational, dialectical examination if it is to be part of a genuine philosophical search."¹⁵ The myths Socrates creates in his speeches are the beginning of philosophy because they inspire self-reflection and philosophical eros. Reading is not enough; *thinking* and *discussing* ideas is ascent to Beauty itself.

Rhetoric's "big brother" is dialectical reasoning. Socrates asks Phaedrus if he can think of "another kind of discourse, a legitimate brother to this one" that is "by nature

¹¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 275a.

¹² Plato *Phaedrus* 275d1.

¹³ It is like the cinematic technique known as "breaking the fourth wall," where a character, like Woody Allen in *Annie Hall*, looks into the camera and gives an aside to the audience. The audience remembers they are an audience and not a part of the film, which seems to have the effect of engaging them all the more through their discomfort. A professor breaks a type of fourth wall when she reaches out of her performance (lecture) to ask a student a provocative question or reveal a personal application.

¹⁴ Plato *Theaetetus* 160e.

¹⁵ Asmis 1986, 164.

better and more capable.”¹⁶ Phaedrus is confused and asks Socrates for clarification, to which Socrates responds that it is the discourse that is written “in the soul of the listener.”¹⁷ Phaedrus now understands and excitedly responds that the speech that is written in the soul is the “living, breathing discourse of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image.”¹⁸ Phaedrus is beginning to understand the superiority of dialectic over rhetoric, discourse over speeches. Socrates succeeds in helping him ascend as he gradually changes his perspective on speechmaking, realizing that one who “knows what is just, noble, and good” would not “sow [knowledge] through a pen, with words that are incapable of speaking in their own defense as they are of teaching the truth adequately,” but would sow his seeds wisely to yield the fruit of the dialectic.¹⁹ Dialectic is superior to written speeches because it aids in teaching knowledge effectively, as well as leading souls to *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονεῖν).²⁰ Socrates is reaching the pinnacle of his argument, confirming for a receptive Phaedrus the beneficial fruit of dialectical reasoning:

The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourses make the seed forever immortal and render the man who has it as happy as any human being can be.²¹

Logos is not meant to merely amuse. There is much more at stake here than the instant

¹⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 276a1–2.

¹⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 276a5.

¹⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 276a7.

¹⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 276c5–d5.

²⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 277a1–4.

²¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 276e–277a4.

gratification of entertaining speeches. Both the eternal soul and happiness of both the teacher and student are on the line. The seed of philosophy, i.e, informed dialectic, flourishes when it is planted in the proper environment of the student's soul. Phaedrus's soul, as discussed, is rife with philosophical potential because he already loves something higher than the body. However, the seed of philosophy will not germinate in his soul without being cultivated by dialectical reasoning over sophistic rhetoric. The danger of a sophistic education, as Gary Alan Scott explains, is that the teacher and student are not able to ascend out of the murkiness of rhetoric. Whereas the sophists were known to lecture at their audience, the dialectical method espoused by philosophers accounted for the psychological phenomenon that "only if something the teacher says resonates with the student is the student likely to learn or remember it."²² The philosopher is also not merely honing his skill, but learning alongside the student. To begin, the teacher should have knowledge about the subject, otherwise he will not be able to guide the student towards the Forms accurately.²³ "In a sense then, it is true that, at bottom, all learning ultimately requires a kind of self-teaching too, because," as Scott continues, "for learning to take place, the pupil must appropriate or incorporate the teacher's lessons."²⁴ As Socrates said about the rhetoricians—teachers and philosophers must understand souls and what type of learning environment suit different students.²⁵ Also, Scott says that teaching is such a "shared activity" that "the teacher cannot be really said to teach if the student does not learn."²⁶ If anything, a teacher should be able to open up the intellectual space for a

²² Scott 2000, 175.

²³ Plato *Phaedrus* 262b4–c2.

²⁴ Scott 2000, 175.

²⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 271a5–b5.

²⁶ Scott 2000, 175.

student to recognize their ignorance in certain areas of knowledge, which also allows the teacher to reflect on where he lacks knowledge. Scott interprets Socrates' dialectics as "discourse capable of helping itself [in the student] as well as the man who planted it [the teacher]" because discussing ideas aids the soul's ascent toward divine Forms in both teacher and student. The teacher's job is twofold: seeking knowledge of the topic, but also knowledge of the student's soul (and one's own) in order to cultivate the best philosophical discussions.

It is clear in Socrates' discussion of writing that he believes knowledge should not be hoarded, but shared with as many people as possible. The seed of informed dialectic "is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others" so that all benefit from philosophy. If one writes a record of his knowledge, it is "likely that he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself when he reaches forgetful old age and for everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps."²⁷ Amusing yourself and your followers does not constitute caring for the souls of the youth, which evidently concerns Socrates when he states that it is "much nobler to be serious about these matters, and use the art of dialectic."²⁸ The fruit of the dialectic is immortal and leads to enduring happiness, in contrast to the "vulgar amusement" of sophistic rhetoric.²⁹ The ultimate meaning of speechmaking is not to amuse, but to teach or persuade "for the sake of understanding and learning what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good."³⁰ In order to teach a student, he must be receptive, but that should not dissuade an educator from persuading

²⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 276d1–5.

²⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 276e5.

²⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 276d.

³⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 278a.

the student that what she truly desires is to learn. Once the youth's love for lower objects—speeches, in the case of Phaedrus—is transformed into a love for wisdom, the young philosopher may reap the crop of Forms.

Socrates uses another analogy that is prominent in *Symposium* when he compares philosophical arguments to children. Diotima says in that dialogue that one becomes immortal by “giving birth in beauty, whether in body or in soul.”³¹ Giving birth to ideas is possible in the beautiful environment of the dialectic between souls. In *Phaedrus*, likewise, Socrates says “such discourses should be called his own legitimate children, first the discourses he may have discovered already within himself and then its sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls insofar as these are worthy.”³² These speech-children are created from a twofold method: collection and division of knowledge on the topic, and then collection and division of knowledge about the soul of the audience:

First, you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself; and, having defined it, you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible.

Second, you must understand the nature of the soul, along the same lines; you must determine which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul, prepare and arrange your speech accordingly, and offer a complex and elaborate speech to a complex soul and a simple speech to a simple one. Then, and only then, will you be able use speech artfully.³³

³¹ Plato *Symposium* 206b6.

³² Plato *Phaedrus* 278a5.

³³ Plato *Phaedrus* 277b4–c6.

This emphasis on knowing the audience confirms that to know the truth is not enough; one must share this knowledge in the most effective way. Sophistry confuses this process because it fails to attain knowledge of the topic, but only promotes opinions that seem true, the conventional belief that appear to be wisdom, as Lysias's speech illustrates. His speech failed the first step of the art of speechmaking, that is, to pursue the truth about love's nature as well as the nature of the soul. Lysias did succeed in appealing to Phaedrus's soul, but only superficially; his speech did not care for it. As Socrates notes, the "whole point of the argument we have been making" is to highlight where Lysias's speech fails, while also showing a better way of speaking, the art of speechmaking that succeeds.³⁴

The myth of Theuth and Thamus clarifies Phaedrus's relationship to speeches. Again, Socrates becomes a mythmaker in order to lead Phaedrus to self-knowledge. It is difficult for him to listen to constructive criticism, so Socrates gently channels his critique of Phaedrus's speech-loving into a "healing" myth. This myth, as with the others mentioned, is a *psychagōgic pharmakon*. Phaedrus must learn how to "administer" or apply the healing ideas of it to himself in order for it to work properly. "More than any other dialogue," writes Gellrich, "*Phaedrus* allows us to understand how magic and persuasion are embedded in the philosophical *logos*, which is an art of rhetoric even though some works declare it to be opposed to such an art."³⁵ Socrates concocts enchanting speeches in order to help the audience ascend, but the potion Socrates serves cannot force another to pursue wisdom. It serves as a gentle nudge, or a not so gentle one, depending on the interlocutor.

³⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 277c5.

³⁵ Gellrich 1994, 299.

Socrates' aim is for Phaedrus to begin the process of recollection, also known as ascent, via self-reflection. Simply listening to or reciting speeches does not help Phaedrus's soul. Griswold states, "But in the sense of 'remembering' that is at play in Thamus' critique, Phaedrus' mnemonic efforts illustrate the danger of the written word, for they deprive him of true recollection as well as of dialectic."³⁶ Memorizing for the sake of repeating verbatim does not spur ascent; it is a passive relationship to the world of ideas, awaiting discussion within the pages of the settled text. It is possible to memorize something without understanding it. As is clear from the structure and content of the dialogue, Phaedrus is adept at listening to speeches, and maybe memorizing them, but he gives little thought to the ideas within the speech. Without actively thinking about the ideas within the speeches, Phaedrus will not be able to recollect Beauty itself.

In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates also constructs a speech with a mythological framework for understanding the role of ascent. The essence of Diotima's ladder of love is pedagogy as pushing the student to advance from ignorance toward wisdom starting with one thing that everyone knows something about—physical attraction to beautiful bodies:

This is what it is to go aright, or be *led by another*, into the art of Love: one goes always upwards for the sake of this beauty, starting out from beautiful things and using them like rising stairs: from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives in the end at this lesson, which is learning of this

³⁶ Griswold 1986, 24.

very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful.³⁷

The gradual redirection of love toward Beauty itself is ascent via recollection. The soul is naturally attracted to beautiful objects, and by pursuing beautiful objects the soul is unconsciously seeking the source of that beauty, the form of Beauty. By truly understanding beauty via Beauty itself, the soul will be able to “see” with clear eyes which objects are really beautiful and which are mere shadows of beauty. Socrates constructs myths like the ladder of love, or Theuth and Thamus in order to lead the soul in the right direction. He cannot force Phaedrus to know Beauty itself, but he can cultivate a beautiful environment that is conducive to turning the soul towards higher goods.

If someone got to see the Beautiful itself [...] do you think it would be a poor life for a human being to look there and to behold it by which he ought, and to be with it? Or haven't you remembered,' she said, 'that in that life alone, when he looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen—only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he is in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true Beauty).³⁸

Plato argues that eros is the foundation for one's identity and morality. Without reflection, the object of one's desire is usually unknown, or vague at best. Plato believes that isolating one's desires, and reflecting upon the object of this passionate force within the self is a crucial component to living the best life. Once the individual understands his or her desires, it becomes possible to direct those desires. The process is gradual, and in most instances involves great effort of the will, usually accompanied by a friend, teacher,

³⁷ Plato *Symposium* 211b6–c8. Italics mine.

³⁸ Plato *Symposium* 211d9–212a4.

or loved one who helps fuel the dialectical force of ascent. In Plato's dialogues, the lover-beloved relationship is a significant component revealing the power of *elenchus* and *aporia*.³⁹ Socrates instills a passion for knowledge through *elenchus*. The process of revealing is also the process of accessing knowledge: dialectical reasoning.

The ability to redirect one's desires relies on the assumption that our desires were previously shaped by some outside influence, namely our culture and education. In order to break free of the chains of a bad education that misdirected knowledge away from the truth, one must cultivate a love a beauty that is counter-cultural. What was once the paragon of beauty, truth, justice, and the divine is turned on its head—not for the purpose of a kind of rebellion, but from a greater understanding of what is truly beautiful.

To aid memory, and to serve as signposts along the way, Socrates uses another strategy that features myth as *psychagogic pharmakon*: prayer. In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates recites twelve prayers, four of which are located in *Phaedrus*: to the Muses (237a-b), to Eros (257a-b), to Pan (279b-c), and the fourth a wish that he and Phaedrus should become philosophers, to which Phaedrus agrees (278b).⁴⁰ These examples are “the richest prayers of the dialogues” Jackson adds, “on the lips of Socrates as a man of seasoned maturity” and are philosophical in nature because the content refers to loving wisdom.⁴¹

Labeling the fourth example as a prayer is problematic because there is no recipient of the prayer, and no prayer that is recited by Socrates or Phaedrus. The fourth “prayer” seems to serve as a reminder of the day's insights to become the philosopher as

³⁹ *Aporia* as etymologically related to *Poros* (and *Penia*) as the parents of Eros in Plato's *Symposium* (203b–204a).

⁴⁰ B. Darrell Jackson, “The Prayers of Socrates” (*Phronesis*, Vol. 16 No. 1, 1971: 14–37), 23.

⁴¹ Jackson 1971, 23.

described by Socrates, rather than a prayer to some higher power. A prayer is not provided here because the discussion on rhetoric and writing *was* the prayer to become philosophers. What better way to show one's commitment to loving wisdom than by trying to achieve it? The discussion allowed Phaedrus to practice loving wisdom so that he could become a philosopher. After Socrates' instruction that a philosopher "would be just what you and I would pray to become," Phaedrus responds that, "I wish and pray for things to be just as you say."⁴² Socrates has aided Phaedrus' soul to open up and begin to grow wings, but now it is up to Phaedrus to strengthen them with reason.

Asking how prayer is philosophical is like asking how rhetoric is philosophical—both act as a *pharmakon* that may lead the soul to philosophy. Moss points out that "the main substance of the rhetorical art is dialectic (266d, 269b), and the main point of acquiring the art is to put it to its divine use, which turns out to be nothing other than the practice of philosophy."⁴³ By invoking the divine in prayer, Socrates is leading Phaedrus out of his mundane world and into the philosophical one that had access to divine Forms. It is as if Socrates helps Phaedrus to develop from underground nymph to winged cicada. Socrates' charming incantation leads the buried nymph to the surface, where they shed rough covering and stretch diaphanous wings for the first time; climbing the *platon* tree they sing an enchanting song amongst themselves until they breach the sun-dappled canopy and fly into the sunset.

In spite of his careful analysis, Jackson fails to include an additional prayer from *Phaedrus*, one to philosophical arguments. After the palinode, at the beginning of their discussion about rhetoric, Socrates invokes philosophical argumentation itself. Phaedrus

⁴² Plato *Phaedrus* 278b5.

⁴³ Moss 2012, 17.

is open to the merits of discussing speeches for the sake of uncovering the truth about their topics, but he is reluctant to participate. He reverts to demanding that Socrates perform for him, saying, “We need to hear these arguments [against rhetoric], Socrates. Come produce them, and examine them: What is their point? How do they make it?”⁴⁴ Socrates does not outright ask Phaedrus to stop mimicking his sophist mentors and think for himself, but he does say,

Come to us, then, noble creatures; convince Phaedrus, him of the beautiful offspring, that unless he pursues philosophy properly he will never be able to make a proper speech on any subject either. *And let Phaedrus be the one to answer.*⁴⁵

Ultimately, only Phaedrus can heal his own soul by listening and responding to the ideas in his beautiful offspring, speeches. Griswold notes that Socrates “attempted to induce Phaedrus’ soul to move itself toward philosophy” instead of relying on either him or Lysias to deliver the *pharmakon* that leads his soul to the divine.⁴⁶ Phaedrus must make a choice: to continue down the path of paved by sophists such as Lysias, or to imitate Socrates and discuss ideas as dialectical equals. Socrates sweetens the prospect by using beautiful speeches as “people lead hungry animals forward by shaking branches of fruit before them.”⁴⁷ The difference between Socrates’ rhetoric, which takes into consideration “the kind of speech that is appropriate to each kind of soul,” and sophistry, which either does not or does so without true knowledge of the different types of souls, is that Socrates seduces people like Phaedrus in order to inspire dialogue. In dialogue, both participants

⁴⁴ Plato *Phaedrus* 261a1–2.

⁴⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 261a2–5. Italics mine.

⁴⁶ Griswold 1986, 136.

⁴⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 230d6.

think actively in order to achieve their goal and neither performs for the other; instead, they both engage each other for the sake of wisdom. Socrates is leading the soul from lower realities to a unified higher reality of Beauty itself.

Of the twenty-one prayers mentioned in Plato's dialogues, there is only one dedicated to Eros.⁴⁸ This prayer is unique also because it is the only one where Socrates prays for other people, viz., Phaedrus and Lysias. He asks forgiveness for Lysias's speech and his first speech because they have blamed love rather than praising it. He also hopes, as Griswold explains, that the palinode "fulfills the two main conditions for noble rhetoric outlined later in *Phaedrus*—namely, that one should both speak the truth and suit one's words to the soul of one's auditor."⁴⁹ Socrates ends his second speech with a prayer:

So now, dear Love (φίλε ἔρως), this is the best and most beautiful palinode we could offer as payment for our debt, especially in view of the rather poetical choice of words Phaedrus made me use. Forgive us our earlier speeches in return for this one; be kind and gracious toward my expertise at love, which is your own gift to me: do not, out of anger, take it away or disable it; and grant that I may be held in higher esteem than ever by those who are beautiful. If Phaedrus and I said anything that shocked you in our earlier speech, blame it on Lysias, who was his father, and put a stop to his making speeches of this sort; convert him to philosophy like his brother Polemarchus so that his lover (ἐραστής) here may no longer play both sides as he does now, but simply devote his life to Love through philosophical discussions (ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς πρὸς ἔρωτα μετὰ φιλοσόφων

⁴⁸ Jackson 1971, 15.

⁴⁹ Griswold 1986, 136.

λόγων τὸν βίον ποιῆται).⁵⁰

The soul's ascent is made possible only by a "lover's friendship" (ἔραστοῦ φιλία).⁵¹ The most important *logos* in *Phaedrus* comes during the discussions on the topic of love among passionate friends. When Socrates calls on the god of love, he pairs two words for love together: *philia*, as in love of wisdom (or philosophy), and *eros*, as in the lover-beloved (or *erastēs-erōmenos*) relationship. The pairing of the two is philosophical erotics. Moss agrees that Plato believes "a wise leader can use her disciple's erotic desire for beauty as a tool by which to lead him to philosophy."⁵² *Symposium* harnesses the attraction to various images of beauty while *Phaedrus* plays on the love of a specific image—speeches. "True rhetoric will focus people's love for the fine and beautiful onto fine and beautiful *logoi*," says Moss, "which have been designed to lead the hearers' souls towards the love of wisdom."⁵³ In each dialogue the lover-beloved plays a role in how love and rhetoric relate to one another. The lover is supposed to lead the beloved's soul to becoming a virtuous Athenian citizen by exposing him to speeches and ideas that cultivate civic pride and other virtues. The philosopher is the best-suited lover, i.e., leader of the souls of the youth. The beloved is Beauty; to reach it, one must actively pursue it with the divine madness of erotic vigor.

The last line of the prayer to Eros is arguably the most powerful in its simplicity. The purpose of the dialogue is to lead the reader to commit his life to eros through philosophical discussions. The word translated as "devote" is ποιῆται, derived from

⁵⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 257a3–b6.

⁵¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 256e3.

⁵² Moss 2012, 6.

⁵³ Moss 2012, 6.

ποιέω. According to Liddell and Scott, *poieō* means primarily to “make, produce, first of something material, as manufactures, works of art, etc.”⁵⁴ In this sense, Phaedrus’s life is in his own hands; he has the ability to construct it like a painter makes a work of art.

Poieō can also mean “create, bring into existence, beget, conceive” as it is used in the genealogy of eros in Plato’s *Symposium*.⁵⁵ *Penia* conceived a scheme to conceive a child with *Poros*. The true nature of eros, as Diotima describes, is to actively love

what is beautiful, and wisdom is extremely beautiful. It follows that love must be a lover of wisdom, and, as such, is in between being wise and being ignorant. This, too, comes from his parentage, from a father who is wise and resourceful and a mother who is not wise and lacks resource.⁵⁶

Both conceptions (dialectic relationship) and children (sexual relationship) are created as a response to beauty. Phaedrus should harness his love of speeches inspired by beautiful words, and direct that eros singularly towards its true object, Beauty itself. Ascent is mutually beneficial just as descent is mutually destructive.

The dialogue concludes with an appropriate bookend: Socrates reminds Phaedrus that their “playful amusement regarding discourse is complete” and that he should return to Lysias and give him a full report on the events that occurred next to the stream so that he, too, can benefit from it.⁵⁷ Socrates repeats the difference between a philosopher and a sophist, calling Lysias a “speech writer” (278e1) and not someone who “seriously pursues” (278d1) wisdom. Socrates is providing Phaedrus with a gentle reminder of the lessons gathered from their day spent together under the *platon* tree. The older man

⁵⁴ Liddell and Scott 1889, 650–1.

⁵⁵ Plato *Symposium* 203b–c.

⁵⁶ Plato *Symposium* 204b2–6.

⁵⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 278b6.

pushes the younger one—a lover of speeches—to love wisdom, as a philosopher, instead of what appears wise, as a sophist. As if speaking to Phaedrus, Socrates conjectures the future of his “friend” Isocrates.⁵⁸ Socrates says, “It seems to me that by his nature he can outdo anything Lysias has accomplished in his speeches; and he also has a nobler character.”⁵⁹ Phaedrus is a step ahead of his lover, Lysias, in that his intentions are pure. He loves speeches and does not seek any personal gain from them other than the joy of beautiful words.

Socrates continues to foresee that the speeches his friend writes will improve as he ages, but that there will probably come a time when speech-writing does not satisfy, for “a higher, divine impulse leads (ἄγῳι) him to more important things. For nature, my friend, has placed a love of wisdom in his mind.”⁶⁰ As a speech-lover, Phaedrus has potential to become a philosopher. Socrates becomes mythmaker to lead Phaedrus’s soul out of the realm of the body-sophistic and ascending toward the intellectual-philosophic life. Phaedrus is awed by the speech, and is captivated enough to discuss what makes a good speech afterwards, as he should do concerning all the speeches he hears within the city walls.

As a final reminder, Socrates offers a prayer to Pan that expresses his passionate desire for beauty, harmony, wisdom, and moderation of the soul:

O dear Pan, and all the other gods of this place, grant that I may be beautiful inside.

⁵⁸ Earlier in the palinode, referring to divine madness, Socrates mentions prophecy as “the clear-headed study of the future, which uses birds and other signs, was originally called *oionoistic*, since it uses reasoning to bring intelligence (*nous*) and learning (*historia*) into human thought” (Plato *Phaedrus* 244c5–7). Bird analogies are used throughout the palinode in connection to the charioteer analogy and the process of ascent. They are also an allusion to the cicadas, as they both have wings for the purpose of ascent (flight).

⁵⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 279a3–5.

⁶⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* 279a–b1.

Let all my external possessions be in friendly (φίλια) harmony with what is within.

May I consider the wise man rich. As for gold, let me have as much as a moderate man could bear and carry with him.⁶¹

This last prayer of *Phaedrus* sums up the virtues a true lover will instill in his beloved. It also evokes Alcibiades' description of Socrates in *Symposium*. When he catches a glimpse of what is within Socrates' rough exterior, he says it was “godlike—so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing.”⁶² Socrates' virtue overwhelms Alcibiades, but he ultimately misses the transition from lower goods to higher goods; he covets Socrates' wisdom, but wants to possess it in the same way a rich man can possess a material object—by throwing some money at it. Alcibiades seems to believe that when he associates with Socrates and “throws some time” at him, he will come to possess the same intellectual beauty. At the beginning of the dialogue Agathon mirrors this sentiment when he flirtatiously requests that Socrates sit next to him because “if I touch you, I may catch a bit of wisdom [...] It's clear *you've* seen the light.”⁶³ Socrates flirts in return as he responds that he wishes it were true that “wisdom were like water, which always flows from a full cup into an empty one” because he could sit next to Agathon and “soon overflow with your wonderful wisdom” and be the true winner of the evening.⁶⁴

Associating with a philosopher may make you appear wiser, but it does not make you truly wise, just as attending the celebration for Agathon's poetry prize does not make

⁶¹ Plato *Phaedrus* 279b8–c2.

⁶² Plato *Symposium* 216e6–217a1.

⁶³ Plato *Symposium* 175d1–2.

⁶⁴ Plato *Symposium* 175d3–e5.

everyone at the symposium “winners.”⁶⁵

Alcibiades ends his speech in *Symposium* by comparing Socrates’ internal and external qualities with his arguments:

If you were to listen to his arguments, at first they’d strike you as totally ridiculous; they’re clothed in words as coarse as the hides worn by the most vulgar satyrs [...] he’s always making the same tired old points in the same tired old words [...] But if you see [the arguments] when they open up like the statues, if you go behind the surface, you’ll realize that no other arguments make any sense. 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 great man.⁶⁶

If Alcibiades’ speech highlights the stark difference between the amount of beauty contained by external and internal qualities of Socrates, then why does *Phaedrus* end with a prayer to make the external and internal harmonious? Socrates prays to be beautiful inside, but he also prays that his external possessions will “be in friendly harmony with what is within.”⁶⁷ He wants the external and internal to be friends. He seems to be saying that it is sometimes appropriate to use beautiful language to attract those who are persuaded by rhetoric. “One assumes the philosopher is outside the configuration as the grand manipulator of the transformations,” Gellrich argues, “but the

⁶⁵ Many in attendance were accused of desecrating statues of Hermes and profaning the Eleusinian mysteries, therefore seen as traitorous or of inferior moral characters. Cf. Nails 2002 for a full account of the events in question.

⁶⁶ Plato *Symposium* 221e1–222a5.

⁶⁷ Plato *Phaedrus* 279c.

dialogue [...] reveals the embeddedness of dialectic in the terms it strives to transcend.”⁶⁸

Socrates induces transformation through the *pharmakon* of the palinode. First through becoming mythmaker, second by initiating discussion through questions that spark Phaedrus’s interest, and third by pointing to that beyond the dialectic through prayer that “writes words in their souls” and not on impotent scrolls.⁶⁹ In *Philebus*, Socrates asks Protarchus, “What is the object which catches my eye there beside the rock under a tree?” and responds that “It is a man.”⁷⁰ Perhaps it is Phaedrus he sees, writing these prayers on his soul to remind himself of what transcends speeches and dialectical exchange.

Plato constructed *Phaedrus* with three speeches that gradually improve both rhetorically and philosophically. Socrates acts as magician because he manipulates language in order to lead Phaedrus to recollect Beauty itself. Rhetoric, as a way to lead souls, is not outside the purview of the philosopher. It is a pedagogical tool aiming at ascent. The series of divinities invoked in the prayers of *Phaedrus* point to the ascent that takes place during the afternoon. The prayers in *Phaedrus* invoke the Muses, Eros, and philosophical arguments. Then, Socrates utters a prayer to no god in particular, expressing a desire for him and Phaedrus to become philosophers. Lastly, he recites a prayer to Pan and all the gods of the place where they resided for the afternoon. I argue that the progression of prayers suggests that the soul open to divine inspiration will experience the passion of eros. If a person has “god-sent madness” like that provided by the Muses (first prayer), his soul will be opened to the possibility of experiencing love. Experiencing the madness of love (second prayer) is the start of the soul’s recollection.

⁶⁸ Gellrich 1994, 286.

⁶⁹ Plato *Philebus* 39a3. All subsequent references from Plato’s *Philebus* are from *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

⁷⁰ Plato *Philebus* 38d.

This in turn leads the soul to the yearning for Beauty itself via philosophical eros (third and fourth prayers). The consequence is that the soul becomes virtuous by reflecting Beauty itself, as the prayer to Pan (fifth prayer) seeks.⁷¹

Phaedrus responds that Socrates' final prayer works for him as well because "friends [φίλων] have everything in common."⁷² There is no pantomime of affection as in the beginning of their time together. Socrates has earned Phaedrus's friendship. Although Socrates usually does not venture from the city that has so many opportunities for dialectic, he found a potential dialectical sparring partner under the silent *platon* tree. Together they ascend another rung on the ladder leading to wisdom and *eudaimonia*. The last words of the dialogue are Socrates' declaration, "Let's be off" (ἴωμεν).⁷³ When using the word ἴωμεν in reference to birds, it means to fly.⁷⁴ Socrates and Phaedrus strengthened their soul's wings and ascended while discussing speeches together "with great pleasure."⁷⁵ Now they are ready to join in the larger discussion within the city walls. It is up to Phaedrus to decide who will help lead his soul (a philosopher or a sophist), and to what end (Beauty or an image of beauty). The two "sang playfully, but also appropriately and respectfully, a storylike hymn to [their] master [...] Love, who watches over beautiful boys," and now it is time to head off to the city to mingle their voices with all of Athens in its frenzied procession, like the cicadas who sung above them all afternoon.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Cf. Griswold: 1986, 226–29 for another interpretation of this passage that include the use of "gold."

⁷² Plato *Phaedrus* 279c3.

⁷³ Plato *Phaedrus* 279c6.

⁷⁴ Liddell and Scott 1889, 229.

⁷⁵ Plato *Phaedrus* 265c4.

⁷⁶ Plato *Phaedrus* 265c1–3.

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