

The dialectic of *logos* and *erōs*: Plato's display of
rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*

by

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Abstract

This dissertation offers an interpretation of Plato's philosophical writing that relies on the discussion of speech that is displayed in the *Phaedrus*. As Socrates shows in this discussion of speech, the philosophical writer who wishes to teach the philosopher's art of thinking must write in a way that could facilitate the serious activity of philosophy or dialectic, that is, the examination of the powers and affects of things that are said to be beneficial or harmful to human beings. In both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, Plato displays various speeches of praise and blame about *erōs* or love to which Socrates must respond, hence inviting his audience to examine for themselves the natures of speech and love as complex things, both in terms of their powers and affects in relation to the human soul. In other words, rather than the indoctrination of some rigid metaphysical system, Plato sought to teach through his philosophical writing—dramatic works which can be identified as Plato's "display of rhetoric"—an arduous art of thinking that Socrates calls dialectic.

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Introduction

The Riddle of the *Phaedrus*

Near the end of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates makes several enigmatic claims about writing. By saying that no writing is worth great seriousness,¹ Socrates seems to support Thamus' censure of writing as something that will beget the appearance of wisdom but not true wisdom.² Contrary to Theuth's judgement, Thamus says that this invention will not improve its possessors' memories and make them wiser (274e) because they will become forgetful as their reliance on writing discourages them from using "their own memory within" (275a). In the very same discussion of speech, however, Socrates also describes a kind of writing that *can* make its possessor happy, "to the farthest possible limit of human happiness" (277a). In these speculations, Socrates seems to promote Theuth's judgement instead. According to Theuth, writing is an elixir (*pharmakon*) of memory and wisdom (274e). Somehow or other, Socrates endorses the contrary judgements of both gods about writing as if they agree.

Indeed, the gods' contrary judgements about writing and Socrates' approval of both have led to the development of remarkably incompatible accounts of Plato's writings. While some scholars understand the "critique of writing" in the *Phaedrus* to be the philosopher's own testimony to the unreliability of writing for the dissemination of philosophical doctrine,³ others argue that Plato overcomes these criticisms against writing

¹ *Phaedrus* 277e.

² *Ibid.*, 275b.

³ See Hans J. Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics: A Work on the Theory of the Principles and Unwritten Doctrines of Plato with a Collection of the Fundamental Documents*, ed./trans., John R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 77; Thomas A. Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, trans. Graham Zanker (New York: Routledge, 1999), 62.

in his own dialogues.⁴ Arthur Krentz, for instance, argues that “in spite of the forceful criticisms against written works voiced by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, Plato...still tried to overcome partially these criticisms by writing dialogues.”⁵ Through the presentation of philosophy as dialectical conversations, Krentz observes, Plato’s dialogues allow potential philosophers “to examine philosophical positions and philosophize for themselves.”⁶ While I am partial to Krentz’s insights, his succinct essay does not explicitly unriddle the contrary judgements of the gods or the whole list of difficulties in what Socrates says about writing in the *Phaedrus*. If Socrates thinks that “no written discourse, whether in metre or in prose, deserves to be treated very seriously,”⁷ then why does he say in the same breath that only “words about justice and beauty and goodness...really written in a soul” are clear, perfect and worthy of seriousness?⁸ Does Socrates speak the truth when he claims that the artful writer’s serious writings about such things not only help themselves and their maker, but also contribute to their possessor’s well-being? And finally, what is the serious pursuit that underlies the philosopher’s serious writings, which he is supposed to have composed “with knowledge of the truth” (278c)? As nowhere else in the dialogues will one find such an extensive (and perplexing) discussion of speech, the *Phaedrus* is indeed a suitable place to begin if one wishes to understand Plato’s philosophical writing.⁹

⁴ See Arthur A. Krentz, “Dramatic Form and Philosophical Content in Plato’s Dialogues,” *Philosophy and Literature* 7, no. 1 (1983): 40-44; Leo Strauss, *City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 50-62.

⁵ Krentz, “Plato’s Dialogues,” 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷ *Phaedrus* 277e.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 278a.

⁹ For full-length studies of Plato’s dialogues which begin with insights that can be gained from an interpretation of the *Phaedrus*, see Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato’s Meno* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965); Strauss, *City and Man*, 50-138.

Through the close examination of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, the dialogues in which Plato displays the philosopher's attempts to persuade about speech (*logos*) and love (*erōs*), this dissertation demonstrates Plato's dissemination of the philosopher's art of thinking through the dialogues. By writing in a literary form which this dissertation calls the "display of rhetoric," Plato—like the serious teacher of rhetoric whom Socrates describes in the *Phaedrus*—displays the nature of the soul, its multiformity and identity, and the various powers and affects of the soul in relation to speeches of various kinds.¹⁰ Through such displays of rhetoric, Plato allows his audience to participate in the rhetorical action of the dialogues and philosophize for themselves about the just, the good and the beautiful. And by allowing his audience to philosophize about the various things that are said to contribute to the well-being of mankind, such as speech and love, Plato's writings remind them of the praiseworthiness of philosophy in a serious or fitting manner.

By examining Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus about the true art of speech in the *Phaedrus*, this dissertation begins by establishing the agreement between the philosophers about the ends and means of philosophical writing. To persuade Phaedrus to reject the approachable kind of rhetoric that he knows,¹¹ Socrates employs the same art of thinking that Plato uses to compose the dialogues. Just as it is necessary for Socrates to persuade Phaedrus about speech by using the approachable art of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows, it is necessary for Plato to display the philosopher's tortuous persuasion of Phaedrus to allow his audience to philosophize for themselves about the moral worth of the various speeches that either succeed or fail to persuade. In other words, the

¹⁰ *Phaedrus* 271a-c; see also 245b-247c.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 260a; 273a.

logographic necessity¹² of Plato's display of Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus about speech—like the other displays of rhetoric in the dialogues—is the dissemination of the philosopher's art of thinking or dialectic. Only the use of such an art of thinking allows one to unriddle the gods' contrary judgements about writing and appreciate the seriousness of the philosophers' words about the just, the beautiful and the good.

While Plato displays in the *Phaedrus* persuasions about the nobility (or beauty¹³) of both *erōs* and *logos*,¹⁴ the *Symposium* features a series of display speeches which praise Eros either as a god or a divine being. In all ten speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays, the various speakers praise the various things that they do with carefully embellished language, “thus satisfying the distinctively human need to explain oneself, to justify oneself, to think about why what one does is good.”¹⁵ Some speakers praise the benefits that can be gained from one's love affair, while others praise Eros as the god who is the most just, beautiful and good. In both dialogues, Socrates praises philosophical *erōs* not as a god but as a divine being, that is, an inspiration of the mind that motivates the philosopher's communication with the divine through toilsome examinations of nature. And unlike the other speakers, Socrates does not speak as if his speeches are based on divine or infallible knowledge about the just, the good or the beautiful. Instead, they are based on the philosopher's profound recognition of the difference and distance

¹² Ibid., 264b. Harold N. Fowler aptly captures the meaning of this phrase by translating it as “rhetorical reason.” Here, Socrates seeks to lead Phaedrus to reflect on the ends and means of Lysias' “disorganized” speech, which compels Plato's audience to reflect on the organization of all speeches in relation to their rhetorical power.

¹³ The Greek word is *kalos*, which denotes both physical and moral beauty. A gentleman is a *kaloskagathos*, or “beautiful and good.” The idea of beauty is explicitly examined in the *Greater Hippias*.

¹⁴ Cf. Marsilio Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato: Phaedrus and Ion*, eds. and trans., Michael J. B. Allen, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 39: “in dealing with the beauty of rational souls and of divinities and likewise with the beauty of a body, Plato is correct to discuss the beauty of speech.”

¹⁵ Allan Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” in *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 433.

between the human and the divine. Unlike the gods who are truly wise, the philosophers can only ever pursue wisdom and reflect on the limited wisdom that they might attain through toil.¹⁶ In contrast to divine wisdom, the wisdom of the philosopher is “as disputable as a dream.”¹⁷ By displaying Socrates’ praise of philosophical *erōs* beside the other speeches about *erōs*, either as a god or an affection (*pathos*) of human nature, Plato allows his audience to compare the various speeches and philosophize for themselves about the goodness (or nobility) of *erōs* (and *logos*). Like the unriddling of the contrary judgements of the gods about writing, the examination of the various speeches about *erōs* also relies on the art of dialectic. It is by examining the speeches about *erōs* in a dialectical manner—in terms of the various powers and affects of speeches and souls that can be “collected” and “divided”—that one comes to appreciate Socrates’ praise of philosophical *erōs* and the various things that he does in the name of love or friendship.¹⁸

In addition to engaging with the ongoing scholarly discussions of Plato’s philosophical writing, this dissertation seeks to elucidate the meaning of Plato’s dialectic.¹⁹ Aside from the philosopher’s conversations with his interlocutors, dialectic also refers to “the processes of division and bringing together” that Socrates uses “as aids to speech and thought.”²⁰ Dialectic, in other words, refers to both the speeches that Plato displays in the dialogues as well as the philosopher’s art of thinking. A clearer

¹⁶ Cf. *Phaedrus* 278c-d.

¹⁷ *Symposium* 175e.

¹⁸ Cf. *Apology* 29d; *Crito* 53c-54a; *Symposium* 219e-221d.

¹⁹ Dialectic is derived from the word *dialegethai* (the present infinitive of *dialegomai*), which means conversation. By attaching a technical suffix to the adjectival form of this word (*dialectikos*), however, Socrates transforms it into *dialectikē* (the *technē* is often omitted as is the case with the other arts), or the “art of conversation.” Socrates often uses the various forms of this word interchangeably, and the exact meaning of each use depends on the context. See *Phaedrus* 266b-c, 268b, 276e. A full-scale study of Plato’s dialectic is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

²⁰ *Phaedrus* 266b.

understanding of Plato's dialectic can allow scholars to participate in the "conversations" between numerous ancient and modern thinkers. The concept of dialectic is at the foundation of so many theories of morality and politics, and one cannot help but wonder what it meant for Plato.

Chapter 1

Contemporary Discussions of Plato's Philosophical Writing

In recent decades, much of the scholarly discussion about Plato has converged on the question of the relationship between the literary form and the philosophical content of the dialogues. To situate my interpretation of Plato's philosophical writing in the contemporary discussions of Plato, I shall respond to the prominent accounts of the nature of Plato's philosophy, the literary qualities of the Platonic dialogues, and the relations between them. While the departure from the assumption that Plato sought to teach through the dialogues some system of metaphysical or moral doctrine has reinvigorated the study of what Plato's philosophy is and what the dialogues are, scholars continue to struggle in the attempt to account for the philosophical significance of Plato's use of the dialogue form. By identifying the dialogues as Plato's "display of rhetoric," I argue that one could arrive at a more accurate understanding of Plato's philosophical writing by examining the various speeches that Plato displays in a Socratic or dialectical manner.

I. Contemporary discussions of Plato's philosophy

The scholarship on Plato's philosophy is characterized by its incredible volume and breadth. Instead of a detailed study of this voluminous literature, the aim here is to identify and respond to contemporary accounts of Plato's philosophy that are paradigmatic or influential. While much of the contemporary scholarship has characterized Plato's philosophy as a related set of metaphysical or moral doctrines that he sought to impart through the dialogues, the attempt to extract such doctrines from Plato's writings has always met with criticisms due to its neglect of the dramatic qualities of Plato's dialogues. The more recent rediscoveries about Plato's use of irony in the

dialogues, moreover, have made it unattainable to unsuspectingly extract such doctrines from Plato's writings. While the rejection of the doctrinal Plato has reinvigorated the study of Plato's philosophy and the literary qualities of the dialogues—that is, as philosophical writings that are different from treatises—scholars continue to struggle to account for the relationship between the literary form and the philosophical content of Plato's writings. To understand the philosophical writing of an author that is as resourceful as Plato, one could begin by considering “what the various passages in the dialogues say about the character of good writings...to get hold of very specific hermeneutic rules.”²¹

A. Plato's philosophical doctrines

Many scholarly works from the past century or so approached Plato's philosophy as a set of related metaphysical or moral doctrines that he sought to impart to students of the Academy. Although all three of the prominent approaches, the “developmental,” the “unitarian,” and the “esoteric” characterize Plato's philosophy as doctrine, there have been many serious disagreements between scholars about the actual contents of Plato's metaphysical or moral teachings. Simply put, the “developmentalists” see notable differences between groups of dialogues that teach different metaphysical doctrines, the “unitarians” influenced by Paul Shorey contend for the presence of a “co-ordinated and unified” set of “ethical and social conceptions” in Plato,²² while the “esotericists” claim that Plato's true metaphysical doctrines—more unified and systematic than anything that

²¹ Leo Strauss, “On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy,” *Social Research* 13, no. 3 (1946): 352.

²² Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1903), 18.

could be found in the written dialogues—were *orally* communicated to students of the Academy.

1. The “developmental” paradigm

Most studies of Plato’s philosophy as doctrine subscribe to the “developmental” paradigm to account for the apparent contradictions in the metaphysical doctrines that can be found in Plato’s writings. During its early stage, the “developmental” paradigm was sustained to a great extent by the advancements of stylometry or the statistical measurement of linguistic patterns—such as usage and syntax—in the dialogues.²³ Aside from the general agreement on the dependent variable of doctrinal change over time, however, the wide-ranging scholarship that falls under the “developmental” paradigm is characterized by diverse accounts of both the factors that may have influenced Plato’s development as a philosophical writer and the chronological ordering of Plato’s dialogues and the doctrines they contain.

One may discover the theoretical impetus of the “developmental” paradigm in its early stage in the work of Wincenty Lutoslawski titled *The Origin and Growth of Plato’s Logic*, published in 1897. In this work, Lutoslawski cites Kant as a philosopher “whom all must admit to be a competent witness...that we may understand a philosopher better than he understood himself, just as by means of scientific method we understand the properties of any being better than they could be understood by the being itself.”²⁴

Lutoslawski’s ambition, as he tells us, was “to get an insight into the psychological

²³ For a more recent account of stylometric studies of Plato’s writings, see Leonard Brandwood, *The Chronology of Plato’s Dialogues* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁴ Wincenty Lutoslawski, *The Origin and Growth of Plato’s Logic: With an Account of Plato’s Style and of the Chronology of His Writings* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), 30

evolution of our philosopher,”²⁵ a task that was primarily achieved through stylometry which “may improve our methods beyond the limits of imagination” as it grants the scholar “the higher authority of reason, producing, according to Plato, infallible knowledge whenever a good method is followed.”²⁶ With such great promises, it is easy to understand why so many scholars were influenced by Lutoslawski’s approach and the story that it tells about Plato’s development as a thinker. Indeed, it is in this very influential work that one finds the detailed categorization of Plato’s writings into distinct chrono-psychological stages. According to this paradigmatic account, Plato’s corpus can be divided into four distinct “developmental” groups: (1) the early or Socratic dialogues that are characterized by their aporetic conclusions, (2) the transitional dialogues where Plato posits his “Theory of Ideas,” (3) the middle dialogues that contain Plato’s mature doctrines such as the “Idea of the Good,” and (4) the later dialogues in which Plato refashions his doctrines after being exposed to devastating criticisms during his trips to Magna Graecia.²⁷

Certainly, many scholars who sought to account for Plato’s intellectual development were reticent about the insights that could be gained from stylometry. As W.K.C. Guthrie shows in his *A History of Greek Philosophy*, published in 1975, students of the development of Plato’s doctrines have used a variety of conceptual tools to

²⁵ Lutoslawski, *Plato’s Logic*, 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁷ Many scholarly works subscribed to some version of this paradigm. The following list is by no means complete: Charles H. Kahn, “Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?” *The Classical Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1981): 305-320; William J. Prior, *Unity and Development in Plato’s Metaphysics* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); Rollin W. Quimby, “The Growth of Plato’s Perception of Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 7, no. 2 (1974): 71-79; Richard Robinson, *Plato’s Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); David Ross, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); Gilbert Ryle, *Plato’s Progress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966); A. E. Taylor, *Plato, The Man and His Works* (London: Methuen & Co., 1926); Henry Teloh, *The Development of Plato’s Metaphysics* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981).

determine the chronological ordering of the dialogues and the metaphysical doctrines they contain. In addition to stylometric considerations, Guthrie shows, some scholars have sought “to place dialogues in an order reflecting the progress of Plato’s literary ability, claiming to judge the relative ‘maturity of style’, ‘mastery of dramatic technique’ or ‘artistic power’ which they display.”²⁸ After discrediting this method because of its reliance on the subjective criteria of stylistic maturity, Guthrie defends the more reliable criterion of Plato’s intellectual development as a metaphysician, that “we are surely right in detecting a change in Plato’s attitude to the physical world, a progress away from the exhortation to avert our eyes from it, to use it only, like the astronomer of the *Republic* [529]...towards a developing interest in nature for its own sake.”²⁹ According to Guthrie, Plato’s philosophical method also developed to adapt to this change of intellectual interest. The method of hypothesis of the *Republic*, which had allowed for the “ascent of the mind to a region as far removed as possible from the perceptible individuals of the physical world,”³⁰ later evolved into the method of division of the *Politicus* and the *Sophist*,³¹ which “comes nearer to the activity of scientific classification for which the Academy was ridiculed in comedy.”³² Yet Guthrie did not recognize the criterion of Plato’s intellectual development as the most objective for dating and ordering Plato’s dialogues. Instead, it is the historical events that are referred to in the individual dialogues

²⁸ William K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Plato: The Man and His Dialogues: Early Period*, vol. 4 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 42.

²⁹ Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy*, 46-47.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 48.

³¹ Cf. David Ross, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas*, 104-119. “It is typical of Aristotle’s good sense that, while he completely rejected the ideal of deducing all truth from a single truth, he accepted from Plato the notion of genus, species, and differentia, and by adding to them the natural corollaries, property and accident, established his doctrine of predicables” (119).

³² Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 48.

or how two dialogues refer to each other that warrants the precise determination of the “*terminus post quem*” of any individual work.³³

Indeed, the comprehensive story that the “developmental” paradigm offers is a major interpretive obstacle to anyone who wishes to approach Plato’s dialogues in a different manner. As one disgruntled scholar contends, the “standard interpretation, also called Platonic Idealism, imposes a systematic order upon Plato’s philosophy out of an distinctively unsystematic group of texts,” and “has become an interpretive construct, or a ‘terministic screen’ that dominates our understanding of Plato’s thinking on rhetoric.”³⁴ Since this dissertation is circumscribed to the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, it is unable to offer any definitive response to the systematic accounts of Plato’s philosophical doctrines or the chronologies of Plato’s beliefs and writings that the “developmentalists” have produced.³⁵ However, this dissertation does rely on very different assumptions or observations about Plato’s philosophy when compared to a “developmentalist” interpretation. First, this dissertation does not assume that since Plato is a philosopher, he is *ipso facto* like other philosophers who wrote to impart metaphysical doctrines that might have “developed” over time. Plato does not unambiguously display metaphysical doctrines or arguments in his dramatic dialogues as his final or best available answers to questions that one might have about the cosmos. Secondly, this dissertation does not assume that the various “parts” of Plato’s philosophy are fundamentally different from

³³ Ibid., 52-53.

³⁴ Anthony P. Petrucci, “Rereading Plato’s Rhetoric,” *Rhetoric Review* 15, no. 1 (1996): 5.

³⁵ To satisfactorily refute these systematic accounts of Plato’s philosophical doctrine, one would have to demonstrate the sameness of Plato’s philosophy in dialogues that belong to different chronological groups. See Stanley Rosen, “The Role of Eros in Plato’s *Republic*,” in *The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry: Studies in Ancient Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 102-118; Herman L. Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato: Dialogue and Dialectic in Phaedrus, Republic, Parmenides* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965).

the “whole.”³⁶ Instead of philosophical doctrines that developed during Plato’s “literary career,” this dissertation shows that the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* display (and disseminate) an identical conception of Socratic or Platonic philosophy.³⁷

Finally, this dissertation subscribes to the more recent rediscoveries of crucial dramatic qualities of Plato’s dialogues³⁸ and rejects the unsuspecting interpretation of what is said by Plato’s characters as evidence for Plato’s own philosophical (metaphysical or moral) doctrines. Instead of such doctrines, Plato’s dramatic writings display the speeches of philosophers as they converse with different characters in different settings. Only some of these speeches are explicitly referred to as philosophical or dialectical.³⁹ It is by corroborating what Plato’s characters say about philosophy with what Plato shows of philosophy that one arrives at an accurate account of what Plato’s philosophy is, although such an understanding does not supply the reader with “ready made answers to Plato’s ultimate and most important questions.”⁴⁰ While Socrates does frequently attempt to persuade his interlocutors about certain things, he very rarely argues from some principle or conclusion as if it was able to represent the complete truth.⁴¹

³⁶ Cf. *Protagoras* 329d, 349d.

³⁷ Certainly, these dialogues could have been composed around the same time. Yet the “developmentalist” account seems to contradict the stylistic data. See Paul Shorey, *Unity of Plato’s Thought*, 19: “the differences between the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, both presumably works of the middle period, are as noticeable as those found in any other works that touch on the theme,” but “on no reasonable theory of Plato’s development can they signify real changes in Plato’s beliefs in the interval between the compositions of the two dialogues.”

³⁸ See Rosemary Desjardin, “Why Dialogues? Plato’s Serious Play,” in *Platonic Writings and Platonic Readings*, ed. Charles L. Griswold Jr. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988): 110-126; Francisco J. Gonzalez, “Introduction: A Short History of Platonic Interpretation and the ‘Third Way’,” in *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies*, ed. Francisco J. Gonzalez (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers INC., 1995):1-22; Charles L. Griswold Jr., “Irony in the Platonic Dialogues,” *Philosophy and Literature* 26, no.1 (2002): 84-106.

³⁹ See Jacob Klein, *Commentary on Plato’s Meno* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 27.

⁴⁰ Leo Strauss, “Plato’s Political Philosophy,” 352.

⁴¹ James A. Philip, “Platonic Diairesis,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 97, (1966): 350-351: “It is however obvious that he does not conceive of method as does Aristotle. He does not suggest division as a fool-proof, open-and-shut method of solving problems by

Emphatically, it is Socrates' knowledge of his own ignorance about the whole that moves him to respond the way he does to the influential teachings of wisdom that he encounters. Nowhere in the dialogues does Plato claim to have known more than his Socrates did,⁴² nor is any part of Plato's writing—even when Socrates is silent or absent—unmoved by the Socratic love of wisdom.⁴³

2. The "unitarian" thesis

The "unitarian" thesis that one finds in the contemporary discussions about Plato's philosophy largely refers to Paul Shorey's work, *The Unity of Plato's Thought*. In many ways, this 1903 work was a direct response to the "developmental" paradigm that had come to dominate the "Platonic *Forschung*" at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ On the one hand, Shorey criticized his contemporaries' attempts to impose some rigid metaphysical system onto Plato's writings and the corollary identification of the apparent inconsistencies in Plato's thought that only they can account for through some story of Plato's "development" as a thinker, "as if they themselves and their intelligent readers were in possession of a final philosophy which reconciles all conflicting claims of metaphysical analysis and common sense."⁴⁵ On the other hand, Shorey argued that the study of Plato's dialogues must rely on "a more flexible literary and philosophical

following rules...It is not meant to grind out ultimate truths, which are not for Plato in the ordinary sense communicable. It is meant 'to make better dialecticians in all contexts' [*Polit.* 285D]." The *Gorgias* is the rare case that I have in mind. See David Roochnik, "Socrates' Rhetorical Attack on Rhetoric," in *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies* ed. Francisco J. Gonzalez (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995): 81-94.

⁴² See Klein, *Meno*, 23: "Could Plato, the writer, then, ever assume the role of a 'knower'? Could a Platonic dialogue, the genuine 'image' of a Socratic conversation, destroy the integrity of Socrates' wisdom?" Plato the author certainly knew more about his own writings than Socrates did, but he also did not think that the knowledge of some writings is identical to the knowledge of what the writings are about. Cf. *Phaedrus*, 268c, 275c-d, 278a.

⁴³ See Trent Eades, "Plato, Rhetoric, and Silence," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 29, no. 3 (1996): 251; Griswold, "Irony in the Platonic Dialogues," 96.

⁴⁴ Shorey, *Plato's Thought*, 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

interpretation” to obtain the “true proportions, perspective, and emphasis” in Plato’s philosophy (Shorey, 9). At bottom, Shorey was displeased with the exaggerations that scholars had made about “every variation of phrase and imagery” in Plato’s dialogues in their attempts to fabric some clever account of the “significant contradiction or development” in Plato’s thought (4).

In place of an account of the “development” of Plato’s metaphysical doctrines, Shorey sought to highlight the connectedness or the “unity” between “Plato’s own ethical and social conceptions” as one finds them scattered throughout the dialogues (18). For Shorey, although it is impossible to discover in Plato’s writings “a complete system of philosophy with principles subordinate, derivative, and interdependent, and a fixed technical terminology,” it is nonetheless “possible to present Plato’s ethical and social ideals in a fairly systematic résumé” (8). In other words, Shorey sought to bring into focus the ubiquitous question of morality in Plato’s writings and highlight the consistency or coordination of Plato’s moral beliefs. While I am sympathetic to Shorey’s emphasis on the centrality of moral issues in Plato’s dialogues, there are several aspects of Shorey’s approach that require clarification. Despite his explicit criticisms of his contemporaries’ neglect of the literary qualities of Plato’s dialogues, Shorey’s own account of Plato’s moral or social doctrines also seems to evade “the recalcitrance of his material” (8). For instance, when Shorey describes Socrates’ “just city in speech” in the *Republic*, he seems to assert that this same city unambiguously exemplifies Plato’s “social ideals” (18) as if what Socrates says of this city are not likewise “subordinate to and interpreted by the argument of which they form a part, and recognized as imperfect, but sufficient for the purpose in hand” (13). In other words, Shorey seems to selectively dogmatize what

Socrates says when nothing that Socrates says in the dialogues can be so conveniently used to illustrate Plato's beliefs or doctrines. Moreover, Shorey's thesis about Plato's unified moral and social doctrines seems to eclipse the primacy of Socratic philosophy or dialectic in the discussions of morality that one finds in the dialogues. Indeed, Shorey's characterization of Plato as "an impassioned moral and religious teacher" (5) makes it difficult to acknowledge the connections he sometimes makes between Socratic philosophy and Socrates' moral arguments.⁴⁶ While Shorey correctly recognizes the ubiquity of Socrates' examination of moral or eudemonistic questions in the Platonic dialogues, he seems to misjudge the "true proportions, perspective, and emphasis" (9) of Plato's writings by demoting Socrates' philosophizing to the production of moral or social doctrine. Shorey seems to overlook the fact that Socratic philosophy is the central action of these discussions about the just, the good and the beautiful, and how it is only in the light of Socratic philosophy that Socrates' explicit statements about morality or society can be understood in proportion.⁴⁷

3. *The "esoteric" approach*

The "esoteric" approach to the study of Plato's philosophical doctrines, as it is propounded in the writings of Hans Krämer, J.N. Findlay, and Thomas Szlezák, relies on several estimable sources to reconstruct Plato's systematic metaphysical doctrines that he supposedly taught, *orally*, to students of the Academy. The most important source for this

⁴⁶ For instance, Shorey convincingly shows that the rhetoricians cannot be rulers of the city in speech—a just city—because "they lacked both the 'idea of good' and the synoptic and unifying dialectic required for its systematic application in ethics and politics." Shorey, *Plato's Thought*, 18.

⁴⁷ Harold Cherniss improves upon Shorey's account by highlighting the action of Socratic philosophy and the role of Socrates' doctrine-like statements in relation to philosophy as such. See Harold F. Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas," in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Gregory Vlastos, vol. 1 (New York: Anchor Books, 1971): 16-27. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980): 21-38.

approach is Aristotle's comments on Platonic philosophy in the *Metaphysics*, which—according to these scholars—contains the most faithful account of Plato's actual metaphysical doctrines.⁴⁸ To avoid the perennial controversy surrounding Aristotle's testimony⁴⁹ and the corollary polemics for and against Aristotle, I restrict my response to the works of the “esotericists” and *their* accounts of Plato's philosophy.

In his 1974 work, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*, Findlay characterizes Plato's philosophy as one which “seeks to makes sense of every phenomenon, fact or side of reality that it considers, and also seeks to weave all its separate exercises of sense-making into a single, comprehensive fabric of sense, dependent throughout on the operations of a single supreme unifying Principle or set of Principles.”⁵⁰ For Findlay, it is the “Principles” which he extracts from Aristotle's testimony in the *Metaphysics* that grounds the interpretation of Plato's systematic “Eidetic Theory”—a “programme” that “Aristotle never understood.”⁵¹ With the help of Aristotle's uninvolved or purely factual “documentation of Plato's Unwritten Teaching,” Findlay supposedly overcame the “tentative, suggestive thought-fragmentation” that he observed in the written dialogues (Findlay, 6). To the extent that Findlay also characterizes Plato's philosophy as a systematic and unified set of teachings about the whole, his “esoteric” interpretation of Plato's philosophy—like the other doctrinal accounts of Plato's philosophy—also rests on the same questionable assumptions about what Plato's philosophy is. What distinguishes the “esoteric” approach from the other

⁴⁸ See J. N. Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 29; Krämer, *Unwritten Doctrines of Plato*, 77; Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 62.

⁴⁹ See Harold F. Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945; New York: Russell & Russell, 1962); Lloyd Gerson, “Harold Cherniss and the Study of Plato Today,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52, no.3 (2014); Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 142-153.

⁵⁰ Findlay, *Plato*, 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xi.

doctrinal approaches, however, is how the “esotericist” can make use of the “Unwritten Doctrines” to reconstruct a far more systematic and unified account of Plato’s metaphysics than anything that can be found in the dialogues alone. The “Eidetic Theory,” the “Principles,” or the “meta-Eide” that Findlay extracts from Aristotle’s testimony forms the needles that he uses to entwine the inexplicit fragments of doctrine in the dialogues (80), just as it is in Aristotle’s testimony that Hans Krämer discovers the “Archimedean point” from which he observes the unity of Plato’s true metaphysical doctrines.⁵²

To account for the absence of Plato’s true metaphysical doctrines in the written dialogues, some of these scholars point to Plato’s “self-testimonies” in his writings.⁵³ According to these scholars, the close evaluation of these “self-testimonies” demonstrates Plato’s own critiques against all writings—including his own dialogues—as inadequate tools for the communication of doctrine. Since some scholars have sufficiently demonstrated how the *Seventh Letter* does not contain such an unambiguous testimony about writing,⁵⁴ my response here is limited to the evidence in the *Phaedrus*. According to Szlezák, the discussion about the propriety of writing in the *Phaedrus* demonstrates the reasons why Plato never committed his true metaphysical doctrines to writing. In this “critique of writing,” Plato purportedly delimits “oral logos” from its written “image” to legitimize the oral and delegitimize the written for the communication of doctrine.⁵⁵ Szlezák’s interpretation of this part of the *Phaedrus* is unreliable for several reasons. On

⁵² Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, 104.

⁵³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 71-74, 191-198; Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 39-60.

⁵⁴ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 124-155; Strauss, “Plato’s Political Philosophy,” 348-355.

⁵⁵ Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 39-41.

the one hand, what Socrates says about the serious kind of *logos*—written with the art of dialectic “which make their possessor happy, to the farthest possible limit of human happiness”⁵⁶—is conspicuously missing from Szlezák’s account. In other words, Szlezák misidentifies the playful sowing of seeds in the garden of Adonis as the *whole* art of farming which on that occasion happens to be without any yield of grain. Szlezák too hastily identifies all of writing with the playful part of farming.⁵⁷ Moreover, he overlooks the dialectical basis of the art of farming and how it is art as such that allows the farmer to dictate his yield on the different occasions. It is the art of dialectic that allows the artful farmer to identify the various powers and affects of his seeds in relation to the various powers and affects of the soils in which the seeds are sown.⁵⁸ By omitting half of the farming analogy from his interpretation, Szlezák fails to comment on how the artful writer, like the artful farmer, would act in earnest.⁵⁹

On the other hand, Szlezák’s account fails to establish the superiority of oral communication over its written counterpart for Plato. Nowhere in the *Phaedrus* does Socrates suggest that oral communication is necessarily immune to the problems that writings have. Thamus’ judgement about writing—how it “does not nourish but harms the memory”—and Socrates’ supplement interpretation of Thamus’ judgement that a book “always says the same thing” and therefore “cannot defend itself if it is wrongly criticized,”⁶⁰ as the dialogue itself shows, is just as applicable to oral communication as it

⁵⁶ *Phaedrus* 277a.

⁵⁷ Indeed, Szlezák rejects the possibility that Plato sought to disseminate an art of dialectic through his writings because “the ‘yield’ of the dialectician... must also be understood in terms of its content... and not, for example, only of the transmission of the ‘art of dialectic’ as a faculty without a definite content.” Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 43.

⁵⁸ *Phaedrus* 276b

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 276b-c, 276e-277a, 278a-c.

⁶⁰ Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 44.

is to writings.⁶¹ Phaedrus the listener forgets just as much as Phaedrus the reader, not because of the inherent failings of speech (oral or written) but because of the inherent failings of the soul that is disinclined to toil over learning. Moreover, the spoken-ness of a spoken speech, as Plato shows in many of his dialogues, does not eliminate the danger of abuse by unsympathetic listeners.⁶² To avoid being deceived by the Egyptian gods' reversal of judgement about the invention of writing as Phaedrus was deceived by Socrates' reversal of judgement about *erōs*,⁶³ one must consider both judgements together and determine how the judgements of both gods can be true. After all, Theuth—the Egyptian Hermes—is a deceptive god who remained silent after hearing the judgement of Thamus or Zeus-Ammon. It is the task of Plato's audience to divine Theuth's reply to Thamus or Socrates' interpretation of *his* judgement about writing.

B. The dialogue form and Plato's nondoctrinal philosophy

While the emphasis on the literary-dramatic qualities of Plato's dialogues can be traced back to Friedrich Schleiermacher who—during the early decades of the 19th century—argued for the unity of literary form and philosophical content in Plato,⁶⁴ it is these doctrinal or non-dramatic accounts that dominated modern study. Crucial literary or dramatic elements of the dialogues were often ignored as scholars focused on passages that supposedly disclosed Plato's metaphysical or moral doctrines. Since the 1980s,

⁶¹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 277e-278a. Here, Socrates explicitly comments on the repetitiveness and unresponsiveness of some types of oral communication. See also 228d, 261b, 266c-d, 277a-b, 277d.

⁶² Cf. *Euthydemus* 283d; *Protagoras* 339a-348a; *Sophist* 217c-d.

⁶³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 263c-d, 265a.

⁶⁴ See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato*, trans. William Dobson (Cambridge: J. & J.J. Deighton, 1836; New York: Arno Press, 1973), 1-47; 57-60. The “unity” of dramatic form and philosophical content is a different kind of “unity” from the “coordination” of metaphysical or moral doctrines in Plato's writings. For Schleiermacher, both kinds of unities exist in the dialogues. However, he does not highlight in his *Introductions* the distinction between philosophy as dialectic and philosophy as the dialectician's speeches. See also Klein, *Meno*, 3-10.

however, many scholars have coalesced around the observation that Plato's dialogues are not treatises through which the writer unambiguously disseminates philosophical doctrines. As Plato the character never speaks in the dramatic dialogues,⁶⁵ it is no longer credible to identify Plato's own philosophical doctrines with what his Socrates or Timaeus says,⁶⁶ nor is it fashionable any longer to assume that the dialogues contained such doctrines in the first place.⁶⁷ While these scholars' rejection of the doctrinal accounts of Plato's philosophy is grounded on compelling evidence, their nondoctrinal accounts of the relationship between the literary form and the philosophical content of the dialogues are less convincing. In the wake of the rejection of the doctrinal Plato, scholars have struggled in their attempts to formulate alternative accounts of Plato's philosophical writing or the philosophical significance of the literary form of the dialogues. If Plato did not seek to impart systematic philosophical doctrines through writing, then what did philosophy mean to Plato? If the dialogues are not treatises through which the author unambiguously imparted systematic doctrines of metaphysics or morality, then what are they and why did Plato write them?

1. *Plato the dramatist and nondoctrinal philosopher*

Without a strong consensus about the character of Plato's philosophy, it has become possible to reread Plato's dialogues as works of drama and reacquaint oneself

⁶⁵ See Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xiv; William J. Prior, "Why did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?" *Apeiron* 30, no. 4 (1997): 109-123; Kenneth M. Sayre, *Plato's Literary Garden: How to Read a Platonic Dialogue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

⁶⁶ See Debra Nails, "Mouthpiece Schmouthpiece," in *Who Speaks for Plato*, ed. Gerald A. Press (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 15-26.

⁶⁷ See Gerald A. Press, "Principles of Dramatic and Non-Dogmatic Plato Interpretation," in *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations*, ed. Gerald A. Press (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 1993), 107-127; David Schur, *Plato's Wayward Path: Literary Form and the Republic* (Washington: Center for Hellenistic Studies, 2014); Victorino Tejera, *Plato's Dialogues One by One: A Dialogical Interpretation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999).

with Plato on that basis. For James Arieti, for instance, the dialogues are not only dramatic philosophical writings that are distinct from philosophical treatises in terms of their literary form, they are also—more importantly—dramas.⁶⁸ Instead of philosophical doctrines, Arieti argues that the “positive teachings” of the dialogues are often found in “the drama of a dialogue”⁶⁹—that is, “Plato very often is arguing dramatically against views put forth by his interlocutors, rejecting the views of both Socrates and his disputants.”⁷⁰ While Arieti is correct in treating the dialogues as works of drama, his approach overlooks the crucial differences between Plato’s dialogues and most other dramas. Most dramas, unlike Plato’s dialogues, do not feature the speeches and deeds of philosophers. By identifying Plato’s audience with the audience of some of Plato’s contemporaries or the audience of most other dramas, Arieti overlooks the discussion about speech or *logos* in the *Phaedrus*⁷¹ and what this discussion reveals about the intended audience of Plato’s philosophical writing.⁷² In short, Arieti correctly identifies the Platonic dialogues as dramas that are distinct from philosophical treatises, but he fails

⁶⁸ James A. Arieti, *Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Drama* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1991), 3.

⁶⁹ By the “positive” teaching of the drama, Arieti seems to refer to the takeaway that the audience could arrive at after weighing the different arguments of the dialogues in an informed manner. See Arieti, *Interpreting Plato*, 9: “where each extreme results in some absurdity, the drama suggests an answer: the *via media*—the golden mean—a doctrine writ large in Greek culture long before Aristotle.” Arieti does not demonstrate, however, the relationship between Platonic philosophy and the “*via media*.” Cf. *Phaedrus* 272c, 274a; *Symposium* 202e.

⁷⁰ James A. Arieti, “How to Read a Platonic Dialogue,” in *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies*, ed. Francisco J. Gonzalez (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995), 132. Indeed, such an interpretation reminds one of neo-Hegelian accounts of Plato’s dialectic. Cf. Gustav Emil Mueller, *Plato, The Founder of Philosophy as Dialectic* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965).

⁷¹ The discussion of *logos* in the *Phaedrus* is not restricted to public speaking or Lysias’ speechwriting. Socrates had tacitly elevated the discussion about Lysias’ speechwriting to the art of speech (both spoken and written) in the eudemonistic sense. Cf. *Phaedrus* 270b. The true art of speech is used to give “the soul the desired belief and virtue” by means of “proper discourses and training.” See also *Phaedrus* 258d, 261a-b, 271b-c, 277b-c, 278b-c.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 278c-d.

to identify the central action of the dramatic dialogues with philosophical speeches and Plato's own insights about the appropriate audience for speeches of this kind.

While scholars like Arieti downplayed the question of the nature of Plato's philosophy in their interpretations of the *dramatic* dialogues, others have sought to fill the "vacuum" that resulted from the rejection of the doctrinal accounts of Plato's philosophy. According to Gerald Press, for instance, "instead of beginning with a definition of what philosophy or a philosophical text is [i.e., doctrines supported by arguments], we may have more success by beginning with the assumption that the dialogues *are* philosophical documents and then make our concept of Plato's philosophy conform to what the dialogues are."⁷³ For Press, the dialogues are "enactments" or performed plays that can affect the audience's psychological state. As enactments, the dramatic dialogues "create effects in and through the imagination and emotions of the audience or readers as much as, perhaps even more, than through reason or intellect,"⁷⁴ and "create in the reader or audience the experience of the world as Plato envisions it" (Press, 144). Understood in the light of such an account of the dialogues, Plato's philosophy as such is not only the inexpressible "vision" of the ultimate truths; it also entails "feelings and images, doubts and hesitations, moral and political purpose, continuing engagement with others, perpetual reflection, dialogue" (147). For Press, in other words, Plato's dialogues create in his audience's mind an experience of philosophy that is distinct from the affective qualities of systematic philosophical treatises. While this description of Plato's dialogues is certainly accurate, Press' approach is limited in two important ways. In the first place, it does not consider the passages in Plato's dialogues that discuss the powers of oral or

⁷³ Press, "Non-Dogmatic Plato Interpretation," 139.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

written speech in relation to the different affects of the human soul.⁷⁵ As such, Press is unable to explain how and why Plato displays the use of speech to various affective or psychagogical purposes. In the second place, the identification of Plato's philosophy with the whole of the dialogues overlooks the fact that not all conversations or speeches that Plato displays in the dialogues are philosophical. By attributing the affective qualities of the written or spoken dialogue to Plato's philosophy, Press collapses the distinction between conversation (*dialegesthai*) and dialectic.⁷⁶ While every part of a Platonic dialogue—the speeches and souls of the various characters—can be examined with the latter, not every character who speaks in the dialogues is familiar with its meaning and use.

Another notable scholar who sought to account for Plato's philosophy by reexamining the dialogues afresh is Francisco Gonzalez. Since Plato's dialogues identify philosophy with dialectic, Gonzales correctly observes, the question of Plato's philosophy necessarily concerns “the nature of dialectic.”⁷⁷ By dialectic, Gonzalez refers to the “verbal analysis, arguments, and images” that Socrates uses in the dialogues which as a mode of discourse exists “between everyday discourse and sophistic discourse.”⁷⁸ Gonzalez, in other words, does not identify Plato's philosophy with every kind of speech

⁷⁵ Cf. *Phaedrus* 270c-279c; *Republic* 4.435a-445e.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Meno* 75d; *Phaedrus* 266b, 278d; *Philebus*, 57a-59a; *Republic* 7.531e-537a; *Statesman* 285d; *Theaetetus* 161e. Some conversations are more dialectical (*dialektikōteron*) than others. See also Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 77: “Plato was so absolutely certain, throughout his life, that the supreme method has its being only in conversation... ‘dialectical’ method means conversational method.” Because Robinson's Plato cannot be an “empiricist” who makes “scientific observation,” Plato's dialectician “uses only the faculty of reason” and “words” rather than “diagrams or experiments.” None of the discussions about dialectic in the dialogues is indicative of this “antiempirical” requirement. When Socrates criticizes the rhetoricians' reliance on practice (*tribē*) and experience (*emperia*), he is criticizing their reliance on the opinions of their audiences instead of true or expert knowledge. There is nothing “antiempirical” about expert knowledge in Plato, nor is the art of dialectic based on some metaphysical rejection of everyday experience. Cf. *Gorgias* 459a-463e, *Phaedrus* 260b-262c, 270b, 272c-274a.

⁷⁷ Gonzalez, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

that is displayed in the dialogues. Against the assumptions of the "developmentalist" interpretations of Plato's philosophy, Gonzalez identifies the "nonpropositional" and the "open-ended" qualities of the knowledge that is attained by dialectic as such (Gonzalez, 9). The knowledge that Socrates' dialectic produces, according to Gonzalez, is "knowledge-how," and is thus distinct from the "*propositional* knowledge of something...*that* certain predicates are true of it [Gonzalez's italics]" (7). Moreover, since Socrates "does not pretend to substitute a definition or formula for a concrete experience of the virtues," the moral knowledge that Socrates attains through dialectic as such "is not a final answer that would render further discussion superfluous" (61). Indeed, Gonzalez's work compellingly distinguishes the knowledge that Socrates' dialectic attains from what a "developmentalist" might expect: a complete metaphysical system that is built upon certain propositions that Plato held to be true. However, Gonzalez's account of Plato's philosophy or dialectic also does not focus on the part of the *Phaedrus* where Socrates discusses dialectic in the philosophical sense, that is, how the processes of dialectic can be used "as aids to speech and thought."⁷⁹ As a consequence, the division that is made in Gonzalez's work between dialectic and sophistic does not reveal what dialectic itself is as a manner of conversation or persuasion. Gonzalez does not identify the similarities and differences between dialectic as philosophical conversation and dialectic as philosophical thinking.⁸⁰ Moreover, both of the mythic or metaphoric representations of Socratic philosophy by Socrates—both of

⁷⁹ *Phaedrus* 266b. Some scholars argue that Socrates' claims about dialectic or the art of speech in the *Phaedrus* do not apply to the dialogue itself. See Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 62: "The *Phaedrus*...evinces a keen consciousness of rhetorical and of dialectical method; but it evinces no particular consciousness of method in the composition of the non-rhetorical parts of itself," since "a dialogue must be partly play." See also Charles Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 178-181, 219-229.

⁸⁰ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 33-35, 93-123.

Socrates' inspired praises of his unique *erōs* for wisdom and the dialectical journey that this *erōs* necessitates⁸¹—are missing from Gonzalez's account. Due to these omissions, Gonzalez's otherwise insightful account of Plato's philosophy is unable to demonstrate how Plato's philosophy is related to the literary form of his dialogues in a precise manner.⁸²

In short, these scholars rely on compelling evidence about the dramatic qualities of the dialogues in their rejection of the doctrinal accounts of Plato's philosophy. Plato's dialogues, as they correctly observe, are not treatises through which the author unambiguously disseminates doctrine. However, the nondoctrinal accounts of the relationship between Plato's philosophy and the literary form of the dialogues that are offered in place of the doctrinal Plato are less convincing. Most importantly, these accounts neglect the various discussions or speeches about both philosophy and speech in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* and the philosopher's attempts to initiate his audience into the "mysteries"⁸³ of philosophical *erōs*.

2. *Plato's doctrine of philosophy and the art of philosophical writing*

⁸¹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 249b–c; *Symposium* 210a–212c.

⁸² Gonzalez's account seems to reduce Socratic philosophy to the open-ended "production" of "knowledge-how" or "nonpropositional knowledge." According to such an account, Plato the author sought to teach "knowledge-how" or "nonpropositional" knowledge by displaying such "productions" of knowledge in the dialogues. What needs to be established, however, is that "knowledge-how" and "nonpropositional knowledge" as descriptors can satisfactorily represent what Socrates' philosophical knowledge *is* in *propositional* form.

⁸³ For scholarly discussions of the allusions to the Eleusinian Mysteries in these dialogues, see Vishwa Adluri, "Initiation into the Mysteries: The Experience of the Irrational in Plato," *Mouseion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 6, no. 3 (2006): 415–418; Nancy Evans, "Diotima and Demeter as Mystagogues," *Hypatia* 21, no. 2 (2006): 1–27; Christina Schefer, "Rhetoric as Part of An Initiation Into the Mysteries: A New Interpretation of the Platonic *Phaedrus*" in *Plato as Author: The Rhetoric of Philosophy* ed. Ann N. Michelini (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 175–196. For a succinct discussion of the Eleusinian Mysteries that relies on ancient sources, see W. N. Schors, *The Mysteries of Eleusis: The Secret Rites and Rituals of the Classical Greek Mystery Tradition*, trans. Goblet D'Alviella (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1981), 7–32. Most notably, the "Small Mysteries consisted, above all...a purification ceremony in the Illissos" (Schors 13). Moreover, "it was necessary to have passed through the Small Mysteries before being granted admittance to the Great" (12).

To avoid the limitations of both doctrinal and nondoctrinal accounts of Plato's philosophical writing, this dissertation begins with a close reading of the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* to arrive at an understanding of the ends and means of Plato's philosophical writing. Instead of metaphysical or moral doctrines, Plato's philosophy—as Socrates⁸⁴ shows in the *Phaedrus* (and the *Symposium*) in both speech and action—is the path one takes or the things one does to satisfy one's love of wisdom.⁸⁵ The action of Socratic or Platonic philosophy does not rest on the belief that the philosopher is already in possession of the wisdom he desires, nor does the Socratic philosopher teach what he knows—his own love of wisdom and its boons—by way of indoctrination. Rather, the Socratic philosopher simply defends the opinion or observation that the erotic pursuit of wisdom or philosophy as such is beneficial for human beings. At the same time, Socratic philosophy or dialectic is not identified with every type of speech that Plato displays in the dialogues or the whole of the dialogues. Instead, it is identified with what Socrates calls dialectic—the “processes of division and bringing together” of things that “can naturally be collected into one and divided into many.”⁸⁶ Socrates, a lover of wisdom, also loves these intellectual processes of collection and division. It is with the help of dialectic that Socrates questions or repudiates the speeches of the reputable teachers who claimed to possess wisdom, as it is philosophy as such that allows Socrates to create the speeches, images, or stories that are demanded from him. Socratic philosophy, in short, is

⁸⁴ Indeed, this dissertation takes Socrates to be Plato's philosopher *par excellence*. The comparisons between Socrates, the Athenian stranger, the Eleatic stranger, and Timaeus—though interesting and significant—is beyond my current scope. See Strauss, *City and Man*, 50.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Phaedrus* 227d-228a, 243e-257b, 273d-274b; *Symposium* 199c-212c.

⁸⁶ *Phaedrus* 266b.

understood as the various powers and affects of the philosopher's soul in relation to speech of various kinds.⁸⁷

While the nondoctrinal accounts of Plato convincingly demonstrate that the dialogues are not treatises which Plato wrote to disseminate unambiguous doctrines, it is also true that Plato did seek to persuade or educate his audience about certain things through the dialogues.⁸⁸ Put differently, Plato did practice the philosopher's art of speech in a serious way.⁸⁹ To say that the dialogues contain no systematic or dogmatic teachings about the ultimate truths of the cosmos⁹⁰ is not to say that the dialogues contain no teachings at all.⁹¹ Since Plato knows that the written word can only "remind him who knows the matter about which they are written,"⁹² to facilitate the serious pursuit of philosophizing,⁹³ he must write in a way that could allow his audience to engage in philosophy and review its merits for themselves. While philosophy or dialectic as such "can never become the subject of indoctrination," Plato did write the dialogues so they could be used "for philosophizing."⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Ibid., 270d, 271a-c, 277b-c.

⁸⁸ See Miriam Byrd, "The Summoner Approach: A New Method of Plato Interpretation," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45, no. 3 (2007): 380: "Plato wrote dialogues in order to help us learn...to engage in dialectic."

⁸⁹ *Phaedrus* 277b-c, 278c-d.

⁹⁰ The philosophers' accounts of the cosmos and the things in it are *sometimes* explicitly grounded in probability or hearsay. When this is the case, such accounts are always communicated as *human* as opposed to divine or infallible teachings. Cf. *Timaeus* 29c, 48b-e, 56d, 57d, 59c, 67d, 72d, 90e; *Phaedrus* 235c, 237a, 244a, 274c; *Symposium* 201d.

⁹¹ See Strauss, *City and Man*, 51: "Let us then assume that the Platonic dialogues do not convey a teaching, but being a monument to Socrates, present the Socratic way of life as a model. Yet they cannot tell us: live as Socrates lived. For Socrates' life was rendered possible by his possession of a 'demonic' gift and we do not possess such a gift. The dialogues must then tell us: live as Socrates tells you to live; live as Socrates teaches you to live. The assumption that the Platonic dialogues do not convey a teaching is absurd."

⁹² *Phaedrus* 275c-d.

⁹³ Ibid., 278d.

⁹⁴ Strauss, "Plato's Political Philosophy," 351.

Indeed, the approach that I take to formulate the relationship between Plato's philosophy and the literary form of the dialogues is by no means novel. Instead, it draws from the works of several scholars who have sought to understand Plato's dialogues by examining the things that are said in them about philosophy and writing. Like these scholars,⁹⁵ I do not assume that Plato excluded his own writings from his Socrates' assessments in the *Phaedrus* about the nobility of writing—addressed to “Lysias or anyone else ever wrote or shall write.”⁹⁶ To sidestep the path of “a blind man,” one could approach Plato's writings by taking the path that Socrates or true reason (*ho alēthēs logos*) would take to inquire into the nature of anything:

In considering the nature of anything, must we not consider first, whether that in respect of which we wish to be learned ourselves and to make others learned is simple or multiform, and then, if it is simple, enquire what power of acting it possesses, or of being acted upon, and by what, and if it has many forms, number them, and then see in the case of each form, as we did in the case of the simple nature, what its action is and how it is acted upon and by what? (270d-e.)

Following this path, one could study Plato's dialogues as Leo Strauss does in his *City and Man*.⁹⁷ In this work, Strauss examines the dialogues as a zoologist studies animals because all writings, as Socrates says in the *Phaedrus*, are like painted animals that “stand like living beings.”⁹⁸ Traveling along the same path, this dissertation also examines the dialogues in a Socratic manner. Instead of examining Plato's dialogues as “individuals of one species of strange things” or focusing on the “species” to which they belong,⁹⁹ however, this dissertation focuses on “the speeches of his various characters”

⁹⁵ See Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 95. Klein, *Meno*, 10-31; Krentz, “Dramatic Form,” 40-44; Strauss, *City and Man*, 50-62.

⁹⁶ *Phaedrus* 277d; see also 274c-275b, 278b-c.

⁹⁷ Strauss, *City and Man*, 54-62. Strauss uses two somewhat “superficial” differences between the dialogues as wholes to organize his brief account of the dialogues and the different parts they contain: (1) the different kinds of titles, and (2) the different kinds of narrative frames.

⁹⁸ *Phaedrus* 275d.

⁹⁹ Strauss, *City and Man*, 55.

and the “particular form” of these speeches.¹⁰⁰ In other words, this dissertation seeks to shed light on the literary form of the dialogues and its relationship to Plato’s philosophy by examining the various *parts* of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*—the various speeches about *logos* and *erōs* that are displayed in them—as comparable *forms* of speech that vary in terms of their powers and affects in relation to the powers and affects of the soul. In brief, this dissertation arrives at an account of the relationship between Plato’s philosophy and the literary form of the dialogues by examining them in a Socratic or dialectical manner.¹⁰¹

In addition to the emphasis that is placed on the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, I also subscribe to several other scholarly observations for the interpretation of Plato’s dialogues. First, I agree with the scholarly observation that Plato’s dialogues are ironic or that Plato’s Socrates is a “master of irony.”¹⁰² By irony, scholars refer to Plato’s concealment of things from the characters or the audience of the dialogues or both. Charles Griswold, for instance, identifies six kinds of Socratic irony and six kinds of Platonic irony in the dialogues where Socrates or Plato conceals some important information in the things they say or write.¹⁰³ Just as what Socrates says in the dialogues do not always reveal everything that he knows or does, Plato’s silence as a character of the dialogues also conceals his own intentions and designs as their author. Indeed, there are many ironic situations in the dialogues where the characters are deceived by the

¹⁰⁰ Strauss, “Plato’s Political Philosophy,” 352.

¹⁰¹ It is certainly possible that these dialogues—the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*—are significantly different from the other dialogues of Plato. However, it is safe to assume that all the Platonic dialogues are similar in some important respects, to the extent that they all display rhetoric of some kind about some important subject. The generalizability of the thesis of this dissertation—Plato’s doctrine of philosophy or dialectic in all the dialogues—will have to be established in a future effort.

¹⁰² See Griswold, “Irony in the Platonic Dialogues,” 87; Klein, *Meno*, 5-9; Strauss, *City and Man*, 50-54.

¹⁰³ Griswold, “Irony in the Platonic Dialogues,” 89-99.

things they see or hear. In the *Phaedrus*, for instance, Phaedrus fails to conceal the written copy of Lysias' speech about *erōs* from Socrates and is therefore misled by Socrates' professed wish to listen to his performance.¹⁰⁴ Having failed to conceal the written speech from Socrates, Phaedrus had no choice but to read the speech to him. However, some of the ironic situations in the dialogues are not so clearly exposed.¹⁰⁵ The irony of Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus about the true art of speech, for instance, is more difficult to see. When Socrates had realized that he would be unable to persuade Phaedrus about the true art of speech or dialectic, he was compelled to persuade Phaedrus about rhetoric by relating to him the things he already knows or believes to be true.¹⁰⁶ In short, to identify what Plato shows or accomplishes through the dialogues and how Plato's dialogues are related to Socratic or Platonic philosophy, one must make sense of everything in the dialogues that is deliberately concealed by Plato and his Socrates:

Insofar as his dialogues are to portray philosophizing in order to compel us to philosophize, they shroud all of what they say in the ambiguous twilight of irony. And in this way Plato is able to escape the trap of the ever so vulnerable written work, which cannot come to its own defense and to create a philosophical poetry which point beyond itself to what is of real consequence.¹⁰⁷

The second scholarly observation about Plato's dialogues that I wish to highlight is closely related to Plato's use of irony in the dialogues. In the introductory chapter of *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, Jacob Klein makes the convincing argument that the audience of the dialogues must *participate* in them to understand what they show and what Plato sought to accomplish through them:

¹⁰⁴ *Phaedrus* 228a-e.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Symposium* 201d-222e. For instance, the irony of Alcibiades' attempt to expose Socrates' *hubris*—despite his very recent recovery of sight at 213b—can be observed if the reader compares the different accounts of what Socrates is like on the “inside.” See Helen Bacon, “Socrates Crowned,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 35, no. 3 (1959): 415-430.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Phaedrus* 258e-259e, 266d, 268a-272c.

¹⁰⁷ Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 70-71.

Everything about Socrates' irony depends on the presence of other people who are capable of catching the irony, of hearing what is not said. A dialogue, then, presupposes people listening to the conversation not as casual and indifferent spectators but as silent participants...a Platonic dialogue has not taken place if we, the listeners or readers, did not actively participate in it; lacking such participation, all that is before us is indeed nothing but a book.¹⁰⁸

To understand Plato's dialogues—to communicate with Plato and his Socrates—one must participate in the action of the dialogues and consider not only what Socrates says but also what Socrates thinks and does but does not reveal through speech. To participate in a Platonic dialogue in this way, one must do a few things that are not typically required—to the same extent—for the reading of books. On the one hand, the audience¹⁰⁹ must respond to Socrates' questions and speeches and weigh the things one might say in comparison to the responses of the other interlocutors. Unlike most dramas, what the interlocutors ask and say constitute much of the action of a Platonic dialogue; to participate in the action of the dialogues is to engage in the conversations that are displayed as one typically would with one's friends.¹¹⁰ Oftentimes, this means that one must be open to Socrates' questions and forgo the comfort of one's established beliefs. Socrates clearly does not have all the answers, but one falls prey to Socrates' irony by pretending to know what he did not. On the other hand, the audience must examine—as one would in one's conversations with friends—why the other participants of the conversations would act or speak the way they do. Not only would this kind of examination reveal much about the character of one's interlocutors or friends, but it would also reveal the things that Socrates *does* in these

¹⁰⁸ Klein, *Meno*, 6. See also Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato*, 16.

¹⁰⁹ See Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1(1969): 49. I agree with Skinner that one must consider any text in the light of the identity of its intended audience. When one is reading a Platonic dialogue, however, this task is complicated by the fact that the things that are said in them are rarely, if ever, unambiguously addressed to its "audience."

¹¹⁰ See Strauss, *City and Man*, 54.

conversations. Socrates frequently makes mention of his own “profession,”¹¹¹ but he often is silent about what he is doing when he speaks with his interlocutors. It is the audience’s task to examine what Socrates *does* in the dialogues in the light of what he says about his actions. Only by allowing Socrates to examine the things one holds to be true would one arrive at an accurate understanding of what Socrates says or how Socrates thinks, and only by imitating Socrates in one’s own examinations of things would one acquire the ability to shed light on the unspoken action of Plato’s philosophical writing.

Finally, the third scholarly observation about Plato’s dialogues that I wish to highlight is what Socrates calls logographic necessity (*anagkē logographikē*) in the *Phaedrus*.¹¹² Indeed, Plato’s understanding of logographic necessity—how one must compose or organize one’s speech according to the qualities (the powers and affects) of the soul (*psūche*) of one’s audience—is closely related to the previous observations about Plato’s dialogues. After Phaedrus read the beginning of Lysias’ speech about *erōs* for a second time, Socrates asks Phaedrus if he knows why Lysias had composed his speech about *erōs* the way he did—that is, the logographic necessity of Lysias’ manner of composition. As Phaedrus is unable to see through the deceptive principle behind Lysias’ speech, Socrates elaborates on his question by asking Phaedrus if *all* speeches “must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole” (264c). Like the things that Socrates says in the discussion about the appropriateness of writing that follows,¹¹³ Socrates’ remarks about the logographic

¹¹¹ Cf. *Apology* 28e, 29d; *Phaedrus* 227b, 266b; *Theaetetus* 149a-151d.

¹¹² *Phaedrus* 264b.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 274b.

necessity of *all* speeches can also shed light on Plato's dialogues and the various speeches that are displayed in them.¹¹⁴ In an attempt to clarify how these ambiguous statements can be used to examine Plato's dialogues and the speeches they contain, I will now highlight (1) the relationship between what Socrates says here¹¹⁵ and some other parts of the same dialogue and (2) the relationship between what Plato shows here about logographic necessity and the *Phaedrus* as a whole. Allow me to begin with the logographic necessity of what Socrates says here in the *Phaedrus* in the "local" sense—that is, how the different *parts* of a Platonic dialogue are composed in fitting relation to each other.

Like how a torso is related to the other parts of one's body, Socrates' questions for *Phaedrus* about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech is related to the other parts of the *Phaedrus* in many ways. Most notably, these questions allow Socrates to examine if *Phaedrus*' understanding of rhetoric had been altered by his previous arguments about persuasion and deception.¹¹⁶ Since *Phaedrus* does not remember what Socrates had said about deception after his first reading of Lysias' speech—how "the nymphs, daughters of Achelous, and Pan, son of Hermes" were more skilled at rhetoric than Lysias because of the early placement of a definition of *erōs* in the speeches that they had inspired¹¹⁷—he does not respond to Socrates' question about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech by reflecting on its power to persuade or deceive. *Phaedrus*,

¹¹⁴ See Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse in Plato*, 18, 37; Strauss, *City and Man*, 53.

¹¹⁵ My argument is not that Plato had to place any part of his *logos* in the exact location that they are found. Instead, the argument is simply that each part of Plato's dialogue, according to Socrates' claims, must be understood in relation to the other parts of the same dialogue and in the light of Plato's goals as the writer of the dialogue.

¹¹⁶ *Phaedrus* 260a-262d, 263a-e.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 263d-e.

for a variety of reasons that Plato tacitly discloses in the other parts of this dialogue,¹¹⁸ does not examine the persuasiveness of Lysias' speech or how it "compels us to suppose Love to be some one thing which he chose to consider it" (263d-e). Later on in their conversation, moreover, Phaedrus will recall the things "that are written in the books on rhetoric...that there must be an introduction first, at the beginning of the discourse...and the narrative must come second with the testimony after it, and third the proofs, and fourth the probabilities," or "the niceties of the art"(266d-e). Phaedrus' insistence on the artfulness and the sufficiency of these stylistic devices at 266d suggests that he had been reminded of them by Socrates' belletristic account of logographic necessity at 264c. More importantly, it shows that Phaedrus had failed to understand Socrates' preceding comments about the art of dialectic (265c-266c) as well as the imperceptiveness of his agreement to Socrates' later claim that it is dialectic which enables the "perfect" rhetoricians to persuade through speech (269a-c).¹¹⁹ In other words, Socrates' questions about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech is inextricably related to the other parts of the *Phaedrus*. If Socrates had not asked these questions here, it would be difficult to understand why Phaedrus would mention stylistic devices at 266d or why Socrates was compelled to change tactics in his attempt to persuade Phaedrus about rhetoric. According to this understanding of logographic necessity, to understand any part of a Platonic dialogue or what a character says in a dialogue, one must locate the meaning of what is said in relation to the other parts of the same dialogue. Every part of a Platonic

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Phaedrus* 227a, 228d, 229a, 258e, 265c, 276e, 277a-b, 277d. What Phaedrus knows is intimately related to what Phaedrus likes or craves.

¹¹⁹ For an "unironic" interpretation of the *Phaedrus*, see Julius Tomin, "Plato's Disappointment with His Phaedran Characters and Its Impact on His Theory of Psychology," *Classical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2000): 374-383.

dialogue must be considered *ad loc*, *ad hominem*, and *ad hoc*. Because the author of the dialogues composed his speeches according to such a principle of necessity, no part of a dialogue can be accurately understood in isolation from the other parts of the same dialogue. Put differently, everything that a character says in a dialogue discloses the qualities of that character in a *cumulative* manner, and one runs the risk of missing the point—the action of the dialogue—by failing to consider everything that is said by the same character in relation to the things that they hear from the other characters. The various speeches of the various characters are the various *parts* of a Platonic dialogue that are fittingly composed in relation to each other.

Let us now consider the holistic significance of Socrates' questions about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech—namely, how this part of Plato's dialogue is related to the *Phaedrus* as a whole. If one interprets Socrates' questions about Lysias' speech in the light of his earlier arguments about deception,¹²⁰ then one could understand them as questions about Lysias' ends and means as a speechwriter. Socrates asks about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech because he wishes to know if Phaedrus is able to reflect on its organization and persuasiveness (or deceptiveness). To understand the holistic relationship between Socrates' questions about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech and the *Phaedrus* as a whole, therefore, one must have some understanding of Plato's ends and means as the author of this dialogue. While Plato the author does not unambiguously speak of his ends and means as a character in the

¹²⁰ *Phaedrus* 263b: "Then he who is to develop an art of rhetoric must first make a methodical division and acquire a clear impression of each class, that in which people must be in doubt and that in which they are not."

dialogue, Socrates' questions, nonetheless, compels the audience to search for answers.¹²¹ If one takes a hard look at the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, then it becomes clear that Plato does include in it a discussion about the ends and means of an artful writer. Indeed, Socrates had tacitly elevated the discussion of the blameworthiness of Lysias' speechwriting (257c-259e) to a general discussion of how to speak and write nobly or beautifully (*kalōs*).¹²² Moreover, Socrates later provides a summary of the "whole preceding discussion" (277c) that was initiated by their desire "to examine into the reproach against Lysias as a speechwriter" (277b). This summary contains much of what Socrates had surmised about the ends and means of an artful writer:

A man must know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes, and must be able to define everything separately; then when he has defined them, he must know how to divide them by classes until further division is impossible; and in the same way he must understand the nature of the soul, must find out the class of speech adapted to each nature, and must arrange and adorn his discourse accordingly, offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul. Until he has attained to all this, he will not be able to speak by the method of art, so far as speech can be controlled by method, either for purposes of instruction or of persuasion (277b-c).¹²³

To this summary that outlines the dialectical method of the artful speaker or writer, Socrates adds some speculations about the serious writings of the philosopher:

¹²¹ See Mary P. Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009), 144.

¹²² In this sense, Socrates tacitly collapses the distinction between the good and the noble. To write beautifully or nobly, one must possess the true art of speech.

¹²³ While Fowler's translation is generally reliable, he was compelled to translate "οὐ πρότερον δυνατὸν τέχνη ἔσεσθαι καθ' ὅσον πέφυκε μεταχειρισθῆναι τὸ λόγων γένος" at 277c4-6 as "until he has attained to all this, he will not be able to speak by the method of art, so far as speech can be controlled by method." In the light of the distinction that is made between speaking (*legein*) and speech (*logos*) at 259e2 and the collapse of the distinction between speaking and writing at 261b6-7 and 271b7-c1 when the characters discuss the art of speech in a general way, a more precise translation would be something like: "until he has attained to all this, he will not be able to make artful use of various kinds of speeches (*to logōn genos*) insofar as they can be used with art by nature (*pephuke*)." It is my contention that the "various kinds of speeches" or the *genus* of speeches Socrates speaks of here includes every kind of speech that Plato displays. See also Daniel Werner, "Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Greece & Rome* 57, no. 1 (2010): 21-27.

If he has composed his writings with knowledge of the truth, and is able to support them by discussion of that which he has written, and has the power to show by his own speech that the written words are of little worth, such a man ought not to derive his title from such writings, but from the serious pursuit which underlies them...I think, Phaedrus, that the epithet 'wise' is too great and befits God alone; but the name 'philosopher,' that is, 'lover of wisdom,' or something of the sort would be more fitting and modest for such a man (278c-d).

According to Socrates' speculations, therefore, the philosopher's serious and artful writings must be based on knowledge of the truth about three things: (1) philosophy or the love of wisdom, (2) the kinds of souls that would be sympathetic to the philosophers' love of wisdom, and (3) the kinds of speeches that the philosopher could use to persuade or instruct one's audience about philosophy and its seriousness. Of course, to possess knowledge of the truth about philosophy is not to possess complete knowledge about the whole cosmos or everything that it contains. As Socrates says in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, his knowledge about philosophy is the knowledge or expertise about *erōs*.¹²⁴ Socrates knows about philosophy to the extent that he knows about *erōs* and its various powers and affects as a disputable thing.¹²⁵ Since the philosopher knows that not everyone would be sympathetic to his love of wisdom, the philosopher is compelled to compose his writings in a way that would only seriously affect those who are suited for it. Those who are better suited to follow Tisias "or some other, whoever he may be and whatever country he is proud to call his own,"¹²⁶ are inevitably deterred from Socrates' path. Though its rewards are many and great, the philosopher's journey is long and arduous after all. In the light of Socrates' speculations about the ends and means of a

¹²⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 257a; *Symposium* 177e, 198d, 207c; see also *Theaetetus* 149a-151d. In the famous midwifery passage of the *Theaetetus*, one also finds words such as *prosēkōs* (fitting) and *agogē* (leadership or guidance).

¹²⁵ Cf. *Phaedrus* 263c.

¹²⁶ *Phaedrus* 273c; see also 227c.

philosophical writer who speaks or writes with art, the holistic significance of Socrates' question about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus* is necessarily concealed unless the audience participates in the dialogue and reflect on the ends and means of Plato's philosophical writing. In other words, to understand the logographic necessity of any part of a Platonic dialogue in the holistic sense is to understand the relationship between the literary form and the philosophical content of that dialogue; the logographic necessity of Plato's display of Socrates' questions in the *Phaedrus* resembles the logographic necessity of Socrates' questions for Phaedrus about the logographic necessity of Lysias' speech.

II. Plato's display of rhetoric and the doctrine of philosophy

If one accepts the reasonableness of this interpretive "method" which approaches Plato's philosophical writing in the light of Socrates' speculations about the serious and artful writings of a philosopher, then one would begin the interpretation of the dialogues by examining the various powers and affects of the speeches and souls that Plato displays in them. Unlike those who write "treatises on the art of speech nowadays," who are "deceivers and conceal the nature of the soul" (271c), Plato displays in his dialogues various kinds of speeches that either succeed or fail to persuade various kinds of souls.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Certainly, the observation that Plato's dialogues contain rhetorical displays is nothing new. What is less mentioned, explicitly, is Plato's own use of rhetoric for the composition of the dialogues. See Seth Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato's Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); see also Leo Strauss, "On Classical Political Philosophy," in *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 94.

Since Plato displays rhetoric in most if not all dialogues, this dissertation identifies “display of rhetoric”¹²⁸ as the literary form of Plato’s philosophical writing.¹²⁹

While it could be insightful to approach the various persuasions that Plato displays in the light of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*,¹³⁰ it is questionable if Plato had a similar “division” of rhetoric as Aristotle did.¹³¹ After all, Aristotle’s examination of rhetoric is not limited to the various persuasions that Plato displays in the dialogues.¹³² Instead of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, this dissertation will rely on an interpretation of the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*¹³³ for examining Plato’s displays of rhetoric. Indeed, this discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* is itself a display of rhetoric about speech. After

¹²⁸ As a term that is used to describe Plato’s writings, “display of rhetoric” is inspired by Theodore Burgess’ *Epideictic Literature*, first published in 1901. There, Burgess had arrived at the observation that “Plato was the earliest prose example of a literary man in the modern meaning of the term. His themes came from philosophy, but his style is epideictic in the best and the highest sense.” See Theodore C. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902; New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), 246. Much of this dissertation can be understood as a reformulation of this observation about Plato’s masterful use of “epideictic.” Since Socrates includes the poets in the discussion about the art of speech in the *Phaedrus*, it is highly probable that Plato had understood “epideictic” in relation to both rhetoric and poetics. In other words, the study of Plato’s display of rhetoric in the dialogues is inevitably the study of Plato’s poetics. Cf. *Phaedrus* 268c-269a, 278b-c. Indeed, Plato must have understood his use of epideictic—the display of speech of praise and blame about gods, men, and things—as both similar and distinct from how it was used during earlier times. Such a comparative study, though necessary and insightful, is beyond the scope of the current dissertation. Cf. Andrea W. Nightingale, “The Folly of Praise: Plato’s Critique of Encomiastic Discourse in the *Lysis* and *Symposium*,” *Classical Quarterly* 43, no.1 (1993), 112-130.

¹²⁹ The attempt to relate the “epideictic” form of Plato’s dialogues to the “epideictic” writings that Plato could have read or heard during his life—to the extent that the dialogues are not distorted by such efforts—is also necessary and insightful. Cf. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 1-35; Andrea W. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Leo Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, eds. Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹³⁰ Cf. Harvey Yunis, *Taming Democracy: Models of Political Rhetoric in Classical Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 117-236.

¹³¹ Like Socrates, however, Aristotle also uses a kind of dialectic to examine rhetoric. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354a.

¹³² In the *Poetics*, Aristotle briefly mentions “Socratic speeches” in passing, without any discussion of their aim, power or affect. See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447b.

¹³³ In this discussion, “rhetoric,” the “art of rhetoric,” “speechwriting,” and the “art of speech” are used interchangeably. See *Phaedrus* 259e-260a, 260d-261a, 263b, 267b, 270e, 277b-c.

hearing Socrates' censure of Lysias at the end of his cathartic praise of *erōs*,¹³⁴ Phaedrus had wished to learn from Socrates—who appears to be a skilled maker of contradictory speeches—if it is truly shameful to practice speechwriting as the Athenians say. Socrates, who wishes to persuade Phaedrus to pursue philosophy in place of Lysias' speechwriting—regardless of what the Athenians had believed—sought to demonstrate to Phaedrus through a variety of arguments of the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows. Only when Socrates had recognized that he would be unable to lead Phaedrus to reflect on the true art of speech does he decide to persuade Phaedrus about the difficulty of “true rhetoric”¹³⁵ by using the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows.

Phaedrus' inability to reflect on Socrates' demonstrations about truly artful or noble speeches (both oral and written) shows the enormous task that confronts anyone who wishes to persuade others of things that contradict or differ from their established beliefs. To convince his audience of the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows,¹³⁶ Plato did not write a treatise on rhetoric like the famous rhetoricians who charged “royal tribute”¹³⁷ for their speeches. Instead, he wrote a dialogue which displays a philosopher's attempt to persuade about the need to pursue true

¹³⁴ See *Phaedrus* 257b: “And if in our former discourse Phaedrus and I said anything harsh against thee, blame Lysias, the father of that discourse, and make him cease from such speeches, and turn him, as his brother Polemarchus is turned, toward philosophy.”

¹³⁵ See Edwin Black, “Plato's View of Rhetoric,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 44, no. 4 (1958): 361-374; Jane V. Curran, “The Rhetorical Technique of Plato's *Phaedrus*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 19, no.1 (1986): 66-72; James S. Murray, “Disputation, Deception, and Dialectic: Plato and the True Rhetoric (Phaedrus 261-266),” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 21, no. 4 (1988): 279-289; Werner, “Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*,” 21.

¹³⁶ *Phaedrus* 260a: “On that point, Socrates, I have heard that one who is to be an orator does not need to know what is really just, but what would seem just to the multitude who are to pass judgement, and not what is really good or noble, but what will seem to be so; for they say that persuasion comes from what seems to be true, not from the truth.”

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 266c.

knowledge about the just, the good and the noble (or the beautiful). By allowing his audience to reflect on the various powers and affects of the various speeches and souls that are displayed, Plato allows his audience to participate in the rhetorical action of the dialogue and reflect on the artfulness or the nobility of what the philosopher says about the true art of speech. And insofar as Plato's display of Socrates' persuasion about speech induces his audience to reflect on the various speeches and souls in a Socratic or dialectical manner, he affirms Socrates' speculations about the serious writings of the philosophical writer.

Although it is possible to apply these insights about Plato's philosophical writing for the interpretation of any Platonic dialogue that displays rhetoric or persuasion of some kind, this dissertation will focus on the ten speeches of praise and blame about *erōs*¹³⁸ that are displayed in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. Socrates praises *erōs* on both occasions, and one cannot help but wonder if he praises the same *erōs* to the same end in the different speeches. And unlike Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus about speech, these speeches of praise and blame about *erōs* are not sustained by "short" or "dialogic" exchanges.¹³⁹ Instead of corresponding questions and answers, these "longer" speeches are produced without much interruption. While it is true that the "dialogic" exchanges can be found in many dialogues, such as the *Crito* or the *Euthyphro*, the longer display speeches are by no means rare in the Platonic corpus.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the "dialogic" exchanges or examinations, the display speeches are usually left unexamined by the interlocutors

¹³⁸ Since the interlocutors of the *Symposium* praise *erōs* as a god for the most part, the interpretation of that dialogue will refer to *erōs* as Eros until the interpretations of the last two speeches. Socrates and Alcibiades do not praise *erōs* as a god, but as a daemonic or strange being. For the interpretation of the *Phaedrus*, *erōs* is used as it is censured or praised as madness. Although Socrates will eventually identify *erōs* as something divine, he does not depict philosophical *erōs* or divine madness as a god in any of his speeches.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Gorgias* 449b.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Apology*; *Menexenus* 236c-249d; *Protagoras* 320c-328d.

themselves. For instance, Socrates is shown to respond to Crito's persuasion about the escape by carefully examining his arguments,¹⁴¹ but he is unable to examine Lysias' censure of *erōs* in detail. When Socrates examines his own display speeches about *erōs* and how they had been composed with the art of dialectic,¹⁴² moreover, Phaedrus does not seem to reflect on what Socrates says or respond to these important insights. Instead of reflecting on Socrates' speeches about *erōs* and the nature of *erōs* as a complex phenomenon that has various powers and affects, that is, the knowledge of the truth about *erōs* that the philosopher attains and displays through reason or speech, Phaedrus is only able to recall the things that he had read in the books on rhetoric.¹⁴³ None of the speeches about *erōs* in the *Symposium*, moreover, are explicitly examined by either the interlocutors or the narrators. Though the various speakers respond to the other speeches in implicit ways, Plato does not feature the philosopher's "dialogic" examination of these speeches in the same dialogue. It is possible, of course, that Aristodemus had slept through it.¹⁴⁴

After the close examination of the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, this dissertation will use Socrates' art of dialectic to examine the display speeches about *erōs*. Like the examination of Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus about the art of speech or rhetoric, which contains the Egyptian gods' contrary judgements about writing, the "collection" and "division" of the various speeches about *erōs* also affirms Socrates' speculations about the artful and serious writings of the philosopher. By displaying the

¹⁴¹ See *Crito* 46b.

¹⁴² See *Phaedrus* 264e-266c.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 266d-268a.

¹⁴⁴ See *Symposium* 223c.

various speeches of praise and blame about *erōs* side by side (*paradeigmata*),¹⁴⁵ Plato allows his audience to philosophize about the moral worth of the various speeches and the various teachings about *erōs* that are displayed in them. In addition to the kind of rhetoric that is used by the various speakers, such an examination of the speeches also reveals much about the speakers' beliefs about the good, the just and the noble. And despite the apparent differences in what Socrates says on the separate occasions, a comparison of his speeches shows that Socrates in truth praises the same kind of philosophical *erōs* "in two different ways and in both ways excellently."¹⁴⁶ Unlike the other speakers, moreover, Socrates does not praise philosophical *erōs* because he has attained some divine or infallible knowledge about the highest things. Instead, Socrates praises philosophical *erōs* because he agrees with Plato about the nobility or goodness of philosophy, that is, of the need to incessantly reflect on what one already knows about the just, the good and the noble as a human being:

Philosophy...inspite of its highness or nobility...could appear as Sisyphean or ugly, when one contrasts its achievements with its goal. Yet it is necessarily accompanied, sustained and elevated by *eros*. It is graced by nature's grace.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *Phaedrus* 262c.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 235a.

¹⁴⁷ Strauss, "On Classical Political Philosophy," 40.

Chapter 2

The Dialectic of *Logos* in the *Phaedrus*

This dissertation begins its interpretation of Plato's philosophical writing with a close reading of the discussion of speech (*logos*) in the *Phaedrus*. Since it is in this discussion of speech that Socrates speculates about the serious (and artful) writings of the philosophical writer,¹⁴⁸ it is an appropriate place to begin for the interpretation of Plato's philosophical writing. In this chapter, I show that dialectic as an art of thinking is both openly acknowledged and tacitly used by Socrates in his persuasion of Phaedrus about the true art of speech. To persuade Phaedrus of the laboriousness of truly artful rhetoric, Socrates had to adjust his speech according to the discoveries that he makes about Phaedrus' character over the course of their conversation, which confirms his assertion that "true rhetoric" relies on philosophy or dialectic.¹⁴⁹ By allowing his audience to examine the speeches and souls that he displays in this dialogue as Socrates would "in considering the nature of anything" (270d), Plato disseminates through writing the philosopher's art of thinking in a truly artful way.

I. Phaedrus' response to the palinode and the discussion of speech

The discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* takes place when Phaedrus shows concern for Lysias, whom Socrates had censured near the end of the palinode for the

¹⁴⁸ *Phaedrus* 264e-266c, 270b-271c, 278c-d.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 270b-272a. For scholarly interpretations that would agree with this formulation, see Black, "Plato's View of Rhetoric," 361-374; Curran, "Rhetorical Technique," 66-72; Murray, "Plato on the True Rhetoric," 279-289; Werner, "Rhetoric and Philosophy," 21. For different interpretations, see Oscar L. Brownstein, "Plato's *Phaedrus*: Dialectic as the Genuine Art of Speaking," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 51, no. 4 (1965): 392-398; Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 181-201; Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Indianapolis: Indian University Press, 1997), 218; Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 39-50.

speeches that reproved *erōs*.¹⁵⁰ Phaedrus misidentifies Socrates' censure of Lysias with the reproach that Lysias had recently received from some politician "who kept calling him a speechwriter; so perhaps out of pride he may refrain from writing" (257c). In other words, Phaedrus did not understand why Socrates prayed that Lysias might refrain from writing impiously. Phaedrus does not understand that Socrates prayed that Lysias would turn to philosophy because it might lead *him*, Lysias' friend and admirer, to also reject the apparently unerotic life of speechwriting and lead one's life "with a singleness of purpose" toward Love with philosophical speeches (257b). Phaedrus' inability to differentiate the censures against Lysias suggests that he was also unable to differentiate the two speeches that censured *erōs*. Indeed, Phaedrus' questions about the blameworthiness of speechwriting suggests that he is indifferent to Socrates' mythopoetic depiction of the soul's journey in the palinode. Put differently, Phaedrus is unaffected by Socrates' inspired and beautiful praise of philosophical *erōs*,¹⁵¹ and it is his unabated interest in the business of the speechwriter that allows the examination of speech to take place.

As Phaedrus explains, the politicians of the cities are ashamed of Lysias' profession because they are afraid of "being called sophists by posterity" for writing speeches and leaving writings behind (257d). Phaedrus wishes to learn from Socrates—who now appears to be a skilled maker of clever or "contradictory" speeches—if it is truly

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 257b. For a similar interpretation of the transition from the palinode to the discussion of speech, see Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 122-124.

¹⁵¹ Some scholars argue that Phaedrus is persuaded by the palinode to pursue the philosopher's way of life. While I agree with these scholars' assumption that Plato's writings exemplified the kind of artful rhetoric that Socrates speaks about in the *Phaedrus*, I do not identify the palinode as an example of rhetoric as such. While the palinode does depict and justify the philosopher's love of wisdom, there is no evidence that Phaedrus is persuaded by what Socrates says in this dialogue to lead a life of philosophy. Cf. Black, "Plato's View of Rhetoric," 370; Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, 110.

shameful to write speeches and leave writings behind. Instead of describing the nature of sophistry or how his philosophy is different from sophistry,¹⁵² Socrates decides to expose the politicians' hypocrisy in their reproach against speechwriting. According to Socrates, the most sensible of the politicians in truth love speechwriting and leaving writings behind. Since "they care so much for praise" (257e), Socrates says, these politicians add the names of their approvers to the beginning of their writings. Whenever the writing is approved, the maker (*ho poiētēs*) "leaves the theatre in great delight," but he and his approvers are grieved if the writing is besmeared and he is granted no part in speechwriting (258b). If someone was to attain immortality in the city as a speechwriter—like a Lycurgus, a Solon, or a Darius—they would consider themselves godlike (*isotheon*) while alive, as would future generations when they see their writings.¹⁵³ Since the politicians love the praise and the undying fame that is apparently produced by some writings, it is unlikely that the politician who had reproved Lysias truly believes in the things that he had said against speechwriting. The politician would not in truth "reproach upon that which he himself desires to be" (258c). If speechwriting "is not itself a disgrace" for the politician, then it is plausible, Socrates says, that the disgrace "consists in speaking or writing not well, but disgracefully and badly" (258d). Instead of asking Phaedrus if the politician reproved Lysias for writing badly (or disgracefully) or what a badly written speech is like for the politician in question, however, Socrates elevates the discussion by suggesting that they should question Lysias "and anyone else who ever has written or will write anything, whether a public or private document, in verse or in prose, be he poet or ordinary man," about the manner (*tropos*) "of writing well or badly" (ibid).

¹⁵² Cf. *Republic* 474b-480a.

¹⁵³ Cf. *Symposium* 208c-209e.

Socrates, it seems, wishes to demonstrate to Phaedrus the true reproaches against Lysias as a writer of speeches from the point of view of the truly noble or good speechwriter.¹⁵⁴

Phaedrus is ecstatic when Socrates suggests that they should question Lysias *et al.* about noble or shameful speechwriting. “What else should one live for,” he says, “but for such pleasures?” (258e). Phaedrus’ enthusiasm for questioning Lysias and his distinguished colleagues about speechwriting—how one might attain praise and undying fame in the cities as a speechwriter—prevents Socrates from conjuring up Lysias for questioning as he will do to the dead Protagoras in his conversation with Theaetetus.¹⁵⁵ Instead, Socrates relates to Phaedrus the story about the ancient men whose *erōs* for musical pleasures led them to their nonchalant deaths and reincarnation as cicadas. Instead of questioning Lysias, Socrates playfully relates to Phaedrus the downfall of these lovers of music, whose *erōs* for the painless pleasures of gratifying sounds had degraded them into insects in the perpetual journey of the soul.¹⁵⁶ As either punishment or reward, these lovers of music or speech are reborn as messengers for the Muses and “live in a manner worthy of the life they led in human form” (249a.) While it is their deathly communicative role between Muses and human beings that goads Socrates to continue the conversation instead of falling asleep to their songs, it is their “gift” of not needing sustenance in life that gratifies Phaedrus’ preference for painless pleasures.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ See Werner, “Rhetoric and Philosophy,” 21-2.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *Theaetetus* 164e.

¹⁵⁶ See *Phaedrus* 249b, 256e-257a.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 258e. Judging from the various things that he says and does in this dialogue, one gets the sense that Phaedrus is characterized by his preference for the painless pleasures. Indeed, he was persuaded to exercise beyond the city walls only because Acumenus the Asclepiad had told him that the roads there are less fatiguing. See *Phaedrus* 227a. See also Josef Pieper, *Enthusiasm and Divine Madness: On the Platonic Dialogue Phaedrus*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 6-7. Moreover, his hedonism is responsible for his inability to produce an accurate synopsis of Lysias speech after hearing and reading it many times. See *Phaedrus* 228d. For a similar account of

II. Socrates' examination of the "art" of speech

Of course, Phaedrus is not aware of Socrates' maneuvering that allowed their examination of speech to recommence on less hostile grounds. Instead of questioning the absent and helpless Lysias whom Phaedrus clearly admires, the interlocutors are now to continue by questioning the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows.¹⁵⁸ Here, Socrates seems to differentiate between speaking and writing. However, the examination of the art of speech that follows is not limited to speaking or spoken speeches.¹⁵⁹ Of the examples that Socrates uses in this examination of speech, only Socrates' speeches are "spoken." Lysias' censure of *erōs* is written in a book as are the speeches about stylistic devices that Phaedrus later mentions.¹⁶⁰ Since Socrates examines speech or *logos*—both spoken and written—in a general sense,¹⁶¹ one must be wary of the apparent distinctions that are made in this conversation. Writing down a spoken speech does not necessarily alter its meaning, especially if the written copy can be accurately re-enacted as if it is being spoken. Instead of the alteration of meaning, the transcription of a spoken speech—as this discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* shows—adds to the same speech the emergent qualities of writing, such as transportability, prolonged lifespan, and fixedness.¹⁶² In other words, the apparent turn towards the propriety or appropriateness of writing at 274b is not as drastic as it might seem. Not only does the examination of spoken speech continue into the examination of the propriety of writing or written speeches,¹⁶³ the turn there also

Phaedrus' incapacities, see Jonathan Lavilla de Lera, "The Prayer to Pan of Plato's *Phaedrus* (279b8-c3): An Exhortation to Exercise the Philosophical Virtue," *Symbolae Osloenses* 92. no. 1 (2018): 69-70.

¹⁵⁸ See *Phaedrus* 260d.

¹⁵⁹ See Werner, "Rhetoric and Philosophy," 23.

¹⁶⁰ See *Phaedrus* 266d.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 259e1-3, 270a7, 271b-c. See also, Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 219.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 228b-e, 264c-d, 275d-e.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 277e. The propriety or appropriateness of writing, in other words, is also the propriety or appropriateness of speaking. The propriety or "appropriateness" (*euprepeias* 274b) of speech constitutes a

does not suggest that the preceding examination of speech had excluded written speeches. To identify the true divisions about speech that Socrates makes in this conversation, one must make use of one's "memory within" (275a).

In response to Socrates' question if one must know the truth about what is to be spoken or written about, Phaedrus remarks that he had heard that the budding rhetorician does not need to learn what is truly just, good, or noble, but what would seem so "to the multitude who are to pass judgement," as "persuasion comes from what seems to be true, not from the truth" (260a).¹⁶⁴ Socrates responds to this remark by corrupting a line in Homer's *Iliad*, spoken by Nestor who is advising Agamemnon to divide the Argive army into smaller groups in order to distinguish the courageous from the cowardly among them.¹⁶⁵ Socrates identifies the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus mentions with Nestor's rhetoric—the words of the wise which "must not be rejected" (ibid). However, the rejection of wisdom as such is not replaced by tacit acceptance. Instead, Socrates says, "we must see if they are right" (ibid). Socrates will examine the approachable "art" of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows¹⁶⁶ through a kind of division that is comparable to Nestor's division of the Argive army.

To examine the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows, Socrates conjures up an image of some public gathering—one that would successfully capture Phaedrus' imagination. Here, Socrates likens himself to a rhetorician who is about to persuade Phaedrus to purchase a horse for war when neither of them knew what a horse

major part of the art of speech insofar as the artfulness of speech is premised on one's ability to communicate with one's audience. For the discussion of the relationship between the noble (or the beautiful) and the appropriate, see *Hippias Major* 290a-291e.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 247c-e.

¹⁶⁵ See Homer, *Iliad* 360-368.

¹⁶⁶ Phaedrus identifies this kind of rhetoric with Gorgias at 261c. See also *Gorgias* 463a-466a.

is. In accordance with rhetoric devoid of knowledge of the truth, all that the rhetorician knows is “that Phaedrus thinks a horse is one of the tame animals which has the longest ears” (260b). He is to persuade Phaedrus in all seriousness to purchase the tame animal that has the longest ears by using Phaedrus’ opinion about what a part of the horse is like; he haphazardly praises the donkey—as if it were a horse—as “a most valuable possession at home and in war, that you could use him as a mount in battle” (ibid). Phaedrus’ familiarity with these animals allows him to blare at Socrates’ imagery. Such an attempt to persuade, as Phaedrus recognizes, would be “supremely ridiculous” (260c). In response to Phaedrus’ receptiveness to this vivid demonstration, Socrates draws an analogy featuring a similarly ignorant rhetorician who is to persuade an equally ignorant city. Instead of praising a donkey in the name of a horse, however, he is to praise “evil under the name of good, and having studied the opinions of the multitude persuades them to do evil instead of good” (ibid). Here, Phaedrus seems to agree with Socrates’ claim that someone who makes use of rhetoric in this manner will not likely reap a good harvest from the seeds he had sown.¹⁶⁷ Yet by compelling Phaedrus to agree to his claim on the basis of the hilarity of riding donkeys into battle, Socrates has not led Phaedrus to reflect on the true limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric.¹⁶⁸ It is not evident that Phaedrus has understood how the rhetorician who haphazardly praises a (possibly evil) deed using the opinions of the many about what a good deed is like,¹⁶⁹ is clever and hostile (260c). In other words, Phaedrus’ agreement to Socrates’ analogy here is not

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 250e, 256e-257a; see also *Gorgias* 460c-461b.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Theaetetus* 166c.

¹⁶⁹ See Werner, “Rhetoric and Philosophy,” 26.

indicative of an understanding of the need to pursue knowledge of the truth about good and evil.

Seeing how Phaedrus is captivated by the image of the public gathering, Socrates playfully suggests that this art of speech might now protest in the manner of an appeal. This art of speech, according to Socrates, would probably argue that “without my help the knowledge of the truth does not give the art of persuasion” (260d). Instead of negating the relevance of true knowledge or asserting that knowledge of the opinions of the multitude alone is sufficient for effective persuasion, this art of speech now defends itself through a nominal distinction. It claims that the true and the persuasive are different things. Socrates identifies two possible scenarios in response to Phaedrus’ question if this protest is just. This art of speech protests justly if it is truly an art, but unjustly if it is an artless knack (261a). Certainly, it would be difficult to persuade an audience to purchase horses instead of donkeys for war if the audience had held false opinions about what the animals are like. But to avoid being “clever and an enemy” (260c), the artful rhetoricians must themselves know what the animals are like and how to persuade the multitude to purchase the right animals. In other words, the rhetoricians cannot naively equate the opinions of the many with the truth and must themselves possess true knowledge about the subjects of their speeches. For this art of speech to protest justly—that is, as an art that the rhetoricians must possess in addition to their knowledge of the truth about something other than persuasion, it must itself be knowledge of some kind. The nominal distinction between the true and the persuasive necessarily collapses once it becomes clear that the art of persuasion requires true knowledge about persuasion. For this art of speech to be successful in this supposed contest of words, therefore, it must contain true knowledge of

both the persuasive use of speech and what the speech is about. Unsurprisingly, Phaedrus welcomes the idea of hearing these further testimonies against the approachable kind of rhetoric that does not require knowledge of the truth. Instead of gratifying Phaedrus' desire to listen as a passive bystander, however, Socrates summons the local divinities to aid him in persuading "the fair young Phaedrus that unless he pays proper attention to philosophy, he will never be able to speak properly about anything" (261a).¹⁷⁰ Instead of making a melodious speech that simply censures the approachable kind of rhetoric, Socrates now invites Phaedrus to philosophize and answer on its behalf.

By invoking the local divinities and their protests, Socrates resumes the "hearing" in isolation from the crowd that had been gathered. Phaedrus' approval of Socrates' metaphorical demonstrations of the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric, it seems, led Socrates to undertake a less figurative demonstration. Here, Socrates asks Phaedrus if rhetoric is by nature an "art which leads the soul by means of words," one that remains the same when it is used in public or private, about both serious and trifling matters.¹⁷¹ Phaedrus' fascination with the public contests of words about apparently great things seems to have confined his understanding of rhetoric to "the art of speaking and writing...chiefly exercised in lawsuits, and that of speaking...in public assemblies" (261b). Moreover, he ironically states that he had heard of no further uses of rhetoric

¹⁷⁰ "Proper" and "properly" are translations of *ἰκανός* (adequate, sufficient) and *ἰκανῶς* (adequately, sufficiently), which are the adjectival and adverbial forms of *ἵκω* (come). The adverbial form is also used later in the discussion to indicate the adequacy of the philosophical or dialectical examination of the art of speech, see *Phaedrus* 274b; cf. 262c. For uses of *ἵκω* or *ἦκω* (to have come) in the philosophical sense, see 276e; cf. 227a.

¹⁷¹ *Phaedrus* 261a-b. For helpful discussions of "*psychagogia*," see Elizabeth Amis, "*Psychagogia* in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 11, no. 1/2 (1986): 153-172; Christopher Moore, "Socrates *Psychagōgos* (*Birds* 1555, *Phaedrus* 261a7)," in *Socratica III: Studies on Socrates, the Socratics, and the Ancient Socratic Literature*, ed. Fulvia De Lusee and Alessandro Stavru (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2013), 41-55. As Moore rightly notes, *psychagogia* "implies deception" (55). See also Murray, "Plato on the True Rhetoric," 282.

when his understanding of rhetoric as such is reinforced by some private persuasion.¹⁷² Socrates overcomes this hiccup by reminding Phaedrus of the private uses of disputation (*antilogikē*)—the speeches of the Eleatic Zeno who “has such an art of speaking that the same things appear to his hearers to be alike and unlike, one and many, stationary and in motion” (261d)—much like the ability of those who dispute in the assemblies or the courts about the just and the unjust (*ibid.*)¹⁷³ In other words, Socrates likens the disputative speeches of the public contests of words to the disputative speeches of the private contests by highlighting how both uses of speech are able to create resemblances “between all things between which it can be produced” (261e). Socrates teasingly demonstrates the art of “disputative” speech through an instance of its performance; he produces a resemblance between all arts of “disputation” by identifying their shared ability to produce resemblances.¹⁷⁴ However, Phaedrus is not able to understand Socrates’ playful performance of “disputative” persuasion. Although he is able to identify Socrates’ concealment of Gorgias as Nestor, Phaedrus is unable to identify Socrates’ concealment of dialectic as disputation. Phaedrus’ inability to detect Socrates’ performance of the true art of “disputation”—a collection of persuasive or deceptive uses of speech in their shared ability to create resemblances between phenomena that are alike in some way—compels Socrates to demonstrate through performance the other declared power of the true art of speech. Socrates is compelled “to bring to the light the resemblances produced and disguised” between two remarkably different things (261e).

¹⁷² See *Phaedrus* 261e.

¹⁷³ For an insightful discussion of “disputation,” see Alexander Nehamas, “Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato’s Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1990): 3-16.

¹⁷⁴ Compare “περὶ πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα μία τις τέχνη” at 261e to “εἰς μίαν τε ἰδέαν συνορῶντα ἄγειν τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα” at 265d.

As Socrates shows, effective deception necessitates both knowledge of the truth about deception and the natures of the things being related through deceptive speech. The deceiver must know the similarities and differences between the things that he wishes to “homogenize” through speech and the size of those similarities or differences. Those who attempt to deceive without such knowledge—such as the rhetorician who praises the donkey in the name of the horse not knowing what these animals are like—will be unable to make “his hearers pass from one thing to its opposite by leading them through the intervening resemblances,” or avoid deceiving himself” (262b). Due to his reliance on the opinions of those whom he seeks to deceive, that rhetorician will remain ignorant about both the deceptive use of speech and the truth of his subject of deception, and “will, it seems, attain an art of speech which is ridiculous, and not an art at all” (262c). According to Socrates’ exposition, the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows cannot be truly an art if it compels its practitioners to deceive or harm themselves.¹⁷⁵

Having heard Socrates’ demonstrations about the unreliability of the approachable kind of rhetoric, Phaedrus is neither entirely convinced nor stimulated to ask questions of his own. After all, he was unable to recognize or expose Socrates’ concealed uses of the art of “disputation.” Here, Socrates suggests that they should examine Lysias’ speech about *erōs*. This is something that Phaedrus had wished to do much earlier in the conversation (242a). In addition to agreeing to Socrates’ suggestion, Phaedrus also complains that “our talk is too abstract, since we lack sufficient examples” (262c). This comment probably alters Socrates’ plan to examine Lysias’ speech according to the preceding demonstrations about truly artful rhetoric—that is, if Lysias’ censure of *erōs* is

¹⁷⁵ See Murray, “Plato on the True Rhetoric,” 284; Werner, “Rhetoric and Philosophy,” 27.

indicative of true knowledge about *erōs* and true knowledge about the art of persuasion. Phaedrus' unwitting demand for sufficient examples means that Socrates cannot examine Lysias' speech alone; his own inspired speeches about *erōs* will have to be looked at as well. Indeed, Socrates now comments on their good fortune of possessing "an example of the way in which one who knows the truth may lead his hearer on with sportive words" (262d).¹⁷⁶ Since Socrates has no share in the art of speech, the sufficient example of the art of rhetoric that he now sees in his own speeches about *erōs*—the apparent reversal of judgement about *erōs* by someone who possesses the true art of rhetoric or deception—is necessarily inspired by the local divinities. On the one hand, Socrates soliloquizes his inability to persuade Phaedrus to lead a life of philosophy through his palinode and the discussion of the nobility of speech thus far. On the other hand, Socrates acknowledges the divine inspiration that allowed him to inadvertently produce such a clever-looking speech that contains contrary judgements about the same thing.¹⁷⁷

III. Socrates' examination of Lysias' censure of erōs

The brief discussion after the first reading of Lysias' speech suggests that Lysias had overlooked the risk that not everyone would have agreed with his "undefined" account of *erōs*. According to Socrates' indirect or well-mannered comments, it was Lysias' inability to collect or identify what it is that makes a subject more "easy to deceive" about (263b)—the disputability or doubtfulness of a thing—that led to his failure

¹⁷⁶ If one takes the dual here as referring to both Lysias' speech and Socrates' two speeches as one, as Hackforth does, then the one who playfully leads with words—knowing the truth of the speeches—would be Plato himself. Plato, in displaying two censures of *erōs* and one praise of *erōs*, playfully deceives about his own beliefs about the praiseworthiness of *erōs*. See R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus*, translated, with an introduction and commentary (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1952), 125; see also Ronna Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus: A Defense of a Philosophical Art of Writing* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980): 80-81.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 261c-d.

to feature a deceptive introduction which likened *erōs* to its blameworthy part as a representation of the whole.¹⁷⁸ By making use of an incomplete definition of what *erōs* is in its introduction,¹⁷⁹ Lysias' speech would have been augmented by a more powerful disguise than his unstated "definition" of *erōs* that sustained his speech in an "unstructured" way. While Phaedrus seems to be stimulated by what Socrates says here, his excitement is not caused by a sudden realization of the artlessness of Lysias' deceptive speech. Rather, Socrates' comments stimulate Phaedrus because it resembles the approachable kind of rhetoric that he knows. Phaedrus is aroused by the pleasures of spectating the multitude in their disputes over doubtful things. It is incredible that Phaedrus now understands *how* the divinities that inspired Socrates are more artful at the making of speeches than Lysias knowing the disputability of disputable subjects. That is, *how* Socrates' speeches about *erōs* had made use of the disputability of *erōs* to deceive through syllogistically related definitions of *erōs* as forms of madness when Lysias is unable to do the same thing.¹⁸⁰ In other words, Phaedrus praises the use of the definitions of *erōs* in Socrates' inspired speeches not knowing why these definitions are the manifestations of the true art of "disputation" that allows "one who knows the truth" to "lead his hearers on with sportive words" (262d).

Socrates adds to his appraisal of Lysias' speech when Phaedrus reads it for a second time. Not only does Lysias fail to offer a definition of *erōs*, Socrates remarks, "he does not even begin at the beginning, but undertakes to swim on his back up the current

¹⁷⁸ As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, Socrates' explicit comments here about Lysias' speech are deliberately inaccurate. As matter of fact, Lysias does "compel us to suppose Love to be some one thing which he chose to consider it" (263d-e). As such, Lysias' speech is composed according to an implicit principle of organization, containing "useful examples to consider, though not exactly to imitate" (264e).

¹⁷⁹ See *Phaedrus* 237b-238e.

¹⁸⁰ See Murray, "Plato on the True Rhetoric," 281.

of his discourse from its end...with what the lover would say at the end to his beloved” (264a). This, of course, is the strategy of Lysias’ “unsuccessful” deception. By beginning at the end of some love affair when *erōs* ceases, Lysias’ speech compels its audience to imagine or recall a fleeting kind of *erōs* to make sense of what he says. Rather than the use of an explicit definition, Lysias creates the likeness between *erōs* and madness through imagistic representation.¹⁸¹ After commenting on how the rest of the speech was “thrown out helter-skelter...that the writer uttered boldly whatever occurred to him,” Socrates asks Phaedrus if he knows of any logographic necessity “why he arranged his topics in this order” (264b). Socrates wishes to know if Phaedrus has recognized Lysias’ “failure” of deception. If Phaedrus has been able to follow and remember Socrates’ previous demonstrations about the art of “disputation,” then he would be able to recognize the deceptive principle of Lysias’ speech and the ways in which it had failed to persuade or deceive according to necessity. Socrates wishes to know if Phaedrus has examined the power of Lysias’ speech about *erōs* in relation to the powers and affects of his own soul. Contrary to expectations, Phaedrus replies: “you flatter me in thinking that I can discern his motives so accurately” (264c).

Seeing how Phaedrus is unable to examine or see through Lysias’ deception, Socrates now asks him if he thinks that “every discourse must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own...not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole,” supposing that he might agree to this assertion (264c). Socrates elevates his previous question about the logographic necessity (or artfulness) of Lysias’ speech by asking a question about the

¹⁸¹ The famous quarrel between a prudent non-lover and a mad lover is featured in Euripides’ *Medea*, first performed in 431 BCE at the City Dionysia.

logographic necessity of all speeches. Instead of exposing Lysias' selfish deception, Socrates—under the supervision of the Muses—persistently attempts to elevate Phaedrus' understanding of rhetoric by pointing toward the possibility of an art of speech that is artful in the precise or necessary sense. Though Phaedrus agrees to Socrates' statements about logographic necessity, his acceptance of what Socrates says here is not indicative of rigorous reflection. Phaedrus does not examine the things that Socrates says about logographic necessity in relation to the things that Socrates has already said about the true art of speech. In other words, Phaedrus does not agree to what Socrates says about logographic necessity because he has finally recognized the failings of Lysias' speech about *erōs* or the failings of his own soul which Lysias was able to deceive.

Indeed, Socrates faces the challenging task of demonstrating Lysias' failure of persuasion to Phaedrus, who is charmed by Lysias' censure of *erōs* and the approachable kind of rhetoric that Lysias practices.¹⁸² A direct and thoroughgoing demonstration of how Lysias' censure of *erōs* fails to persuade would be ill-mannered (and ineffective), and the exposition of Lysias' selfish deception is trumped by a successful exposition of the irony of rhetoric as such.¹⁸³ Socrates' inability to politely demonstrate to Phaedrus the defects of Lysias' speech (or the affects of Phaedrus' soul) compels him to terminate its examination in an analogy that manages to represent the truth about Lysias' speech in a playful manner. Instead of arguing that Lysias' censure of *erōs* is not composed according to the true art of speech or knowledge of the truth, Socrates playfully likens it

¹⁸² I offer a more detailed analysis of Lysias' speech in the next chapter. The rather brief discussion of these speeches in this part of the *Phaedrus* compels one to reexamine for oneself the actual contents of these speeches. See Kenneth Dorter, "The Method of Division and the Division of the *Phaedrus*," *Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2006): 271.

¹⁸³ See G.R. F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 55.

to the epitaph of a proverbially greedy man. By likening Lysias' speech to the lifeless lamentations of a bronze maiden—how “it makes no difference whether any line of it is put first or last” (264e)—Socrates seems to accentuate its lack of definition and organized argumentation. Although Phaedrus objects to Socrates' analogy, he does not inquire into Socrates' more serious criticisms against Lysias' “disorganized” speech. Phaedrus does not investigate *how* Lysias' failure to speak or teach about *erōs* according to the truth had rendered his speech tomblike.¹⁸⁴

IV. Socrates' examination of his own speech about erōs

To avoid burdening Phaedrus with further criticisms against Lysias, Socrates suggests that they now turn to the other speeches. There is something in them, Socrates says, befitting to see for those who wish to examine about speeches. In contrast to Phaedrus' praise of Socrates' speech which *manfully* displayed opposed judgements about the same thing,¹⁸⁵ Socrates' summary of his own speeches shows that it was *madness* that had allowed his speech to pass from censure to praise. There are many things to consider for the interpretation of what Socrates says. On the one hand, madness is the syllogistic “passage” that allowed Socrates to collect or identify both blameworthy and praiseworthy kinds of *erōs* as parts of a larger whole and move from a censure to a praise of *erōs*. Insofar as *erōs* can be collected and likened to madness as its parts, it is also necessary that madness as the larger whole encapsulates the different kinds of *erōs* that can be praised or censured.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, Socrates now explicitly distinguishes “two kinds of madness, one arising from human diseases, and the other from a divine release

¹⁸⁴ See Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus*, 79.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Euthydemus* 275e-277c; see also *Gorgias* 485a-486d.

¹⁸⁶ Socrates' speeches about *erōs* as madness is shaped by Lysias' depictions of the lover and Phaedrus' stipulation about what Socrates can say in the “speech contest.” Cf. *Phaedrus* 236a-b.

from the customary habits” (265a). While these distinct kinds of madness share in “one common principle, unreason” (265e), they are profoundly different phenomena that can be “called by the same names” (266a). As the two kinds of madman deviate from two distinct kinds of reason or sanity, only one of these two kinds of madness and thus *erōs* is anoetic in the strict sense. As a divine release from customary habits,¹⁸⁷ the erotic madness of the philosopher goads him to pursue the divine through dialectic.¹⁸⁸ This kind of eroticism is “mad” only to the extent that it appears strange or extraordinary from the point of view of the established customs. On the other hand, madness had allowed Socrates’ inspired speech about *erōs* to pass from censure to praise because dialectic is the characteristic symptom of Socrates’ erotic madness. In this regard, Socrates’ speech about *erōs* was able to pass from censure to praise because he was enthused by the praiseworthy kind of *erōs* to speak about *erōs* in a praiseworthy way—that is, to censure and praise *erōs* according to uncustomary knowledge about *erōs* as a disputable or complex phenomenon. It was Phaedrus’ demand for conversation (*dialegesthai*) that reminded Socrates of his strange expertise of love and the mistake that he had made in the “middle” speech.¹⁸⁹ By engaging in a more dialectical examination of the phenomenon of *erōs*, Socrates was able to transcend the customary definition of *erōs* as an oppressive disease and offer “a somewhat plausible discourse” (265b) about *erōs* as “a god or something divine” (242e).

Moreover, it is Socrates’ explicit demonstration of the use of dialectic in his speeches about *erōs* that reveals the implicit use of dialectic in the preceding examination

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1967), 36-38.

¹⁸⁸ See *Phaedrus* 249b-c, 252e-253a.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 242a-243e, 257a.

of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows. The principle of collection, or the use of one's mind to gather or recall particulars into one definition or idea, can now be observed in Socrates' identification of the shared limitations of rhetorical practices that rely on the opinions of the many (260a-d), the dialectical basis of both public and private "disputations" as examples of the true art of speech (261a-262c), and the disputability of complex phenomena in contradistinction to the indisputability of simple ones (263a-e). The principle of division, "that of dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are" (265d), a process that is already implied in the process of collection insofar as the identification of sameness necessitates the identification of differences or boundaries,¹⁹⁰ was also tacitly used in the same examination that distinguished the truly artful uses of speech from artless rhetoric. Socrates' demonstration of the dialectical basis of his own speeches about *erōs* as madness, in other words, reveals the dialectical qualities of the examination about speech and Plato's own written speech that displays Socrates' dialectical examination of speech.¹⁹¹ Dialectic is the true art of speech that contains but transcends the artful creation of spoken or written speeches; it is the philosopher's toilsome art of thinking that is necessarily disseminated through both speech and action.¹⁹² When Socrates asks Phaedrus if dialectic as such is the art of speech

¹⁹⁰ See Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge and Discourse*, 34: "it seems impossible to describe a given step in a dialectical analysis as either a generalization or a division; each step may with complete accuracy be viewed as both." See also Michael V. Wedin, "Collection and Division in the *Phaedrus* and *Statesman*," *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 5, no. 2 (1987): 207-233.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 62: "The *Phaedrus*...evinces a keen consciousness of rhetorical and of dialectical method; but it evinces no particular consciousness of method in the composition of the non-rhetorical parts of itself." For a similar response to Robinson's account, see Curran, "Plato's *Phaedrus*," 70-71.

¹⁹² See Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, 232: "there is no τεχνικός λόγων who is not first of all διαλεκτικός." See also, Werner, "Rhetoric and Philosophy," 39-44. While I agree with Werner's assertion that the true art of speech is untenable for human beings if it is defined as the complete knowledge of the truth, the emphasis of Socrates' art of dialectic is the philosopher's ability to identify such distinctions and deficiencies in human nature.

“by means of which Thrasymachus and the rest have become able speakers themselves and make others so” (266c), however, Phaedrus does not side with Socrates with the realization that dialectic is the true art of speech that can lead one toward knowledge of the truth and the true art of rhetoric. Phaedrus has failed to engage with Socrates’ demonstrations of the use of dialectic or reflect upon the dialectical qualities of Socrates’ “clever” speech about *erōs*. Despite Socrates’ disclosures, Phaedrus continues to understand Socrates’ characterization of the “dialectician” as the pedestrian conversationalist whose leisurely chatter about the nature of things is unable to influence large crowds to belief or action. In response to Socrates’ question, Phaedrus says that “it seems to me that rhetoric still escapes us” (266d).

V. Socrates’ persuasion of Phaedrus about the true art of speech

Socrates is surprised by Phaedrus’ remark and responds in an ironic tone: “can there be anything of importance, which is not included in these processes yet come under the head of art? Certainly, you and I must not neglect it, but must say what it is that remains of rhetoric” (266d). Phaedrus’ persistent obliviousness to the centrality of dialectic compels Socrates to readjust his manner of conversation. Instead of trying to demonstrate to Phaedrus that dialectic is the true art of speech that one must use to acquire the true art of rhetoric and all other arts, Socrates will now attempt to persuade him in a less challenging or upward manner. Socrates, it seems, has realized “what sort of man” Phaedrus is and “what sort of speech” one ought to use to persuade him (271d). Rather than an attempt to persuade Phaedrus to lead the philosopher’s way of life,

Socrates will rely on dialectic to lead Phaedrus' soul¹⁹³ by relating to him the things that he already knows or believes to be true toward conclusions about the art of rhetoric.

In response to Socrates' incredulity, Phaedrus recalls "the things that are written in the books on rhetoric" (266d). Phaedrus had been reminded of these stylistic devices when he heard Socrates' belletristic account of logographic necessity earlier in the discussion.¹⁹⁴ In a rather laborious manner, Socrates responds to Phaedrus' obliviousness to dialectic by recollecting a whole slew of stylistic devices that are written in the books on rhetoric. He identifies a whole range of teachings about rhetoric that have deceitfully "come under the head of art" (266d). As Socrates will establish through an analogy that is catered to Phaedrus—a friend of the Asclepiads—the teachings that are found in the books on rhetoric are merely instrumental to the true art of rhetoric. By demonstrating how the various instruments—an Ipecac concoction or a clever figure of speech—are likely to be useless if not harmful without true knowledge of the arts, Socrates will convince Phaedrus that there is indeed a gap (*diestēkos*) in the warp (*hētrion*) of the books on rhetoric (268a). Socrates is compelled to relate to Phaedrus—one way or another—the conspicuous gap that he had already revealed by disclosing the dialectical basis of his own speeches about *erōs*.

Having itemized the various stylistic devices that the influential teachers of rhetoric have discovered and committed to writing, Socrates suggests that they ought to

¹⁹³ That is, to practice the "psychagogic" art of speech. See Moore, "Socrates *Psychagōgos*," 41-55.

¹⁹⁴ Phaedrus' belletristic understanding of Socrates' statements about logographic necessity is confirmed when he accepts Socrates' demonstration about artful tragedy at 268d: "They also... would laugh at him, if he imagined that tragedy was anything else than the proper combination of these details in such a way that they harmonize with each other and with the whole composition." In other words, Phaedrus does not consider the relationship between logographic necessity and the things that Socrates has said about the true art of speech, nor will he reflect on Socrates' demonstration of the *truly necessary* learnings for the persuasive use of speech.

bring these things “more under the light and see what force of art they have and when” (268a). By claiming that these stylistic devices make up the greater part of the art of speech, Phaedrus reaffirms his obliviousness to the art of dialectic. Here, Socrates concedes to Phaedrus’ claim that these devices of speech are powerful in crowded gatherings. Instead of showing how the use of these devices could be unreliable or harmful as he has done in the previous demonstrations,¹⁹⁵ however, Socrates will now attempt to persuade Phaedrus by reminding him of the arts of the Asclepiads. To persuade Phaedrus of the limitations of the things that are taught in the books on rhetoric,¹⁹⁶ Socrates will invoke the expertise of these theologizing professionals to whom Phaedrus is a friend.

As he has done in the first demonstration of the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows,¹⁹⁷ Socrates likens himself to someone who is to attempt to persuade. Instead of trying to persuade those who are equally ignorant of the truth, however, Socrates the ignorant will now attempt to persuade those whom Phaedrus trusts as the true experts. Here, Socrates refers to two sets of experts that Eryximachus will associate with the cult of Asclepius in the *Symposium*: the doctors and the tragedians.¹⁹⁸ Just as those who make use of medical instruments without true medical knowledge will seem mad to the medical professionals (268c), those who do not possess

¹⁹⁵ See *Phaedrus* 260c, 262b.

¹⁹⁶ The teachings of Gorgias or Tisias have been the focus of the preceding discussion about the art of speech. It is discussed again at 272c. For a helpful comparison of the discussions of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*, see Black, “Plato’s View of Rhetoric,” 361-9. As Black notes, these two discussions of rhetoric “supplement one another” (369).

¹⁹⁷ See *Phaedrus* 260b-e.

¹⁹⁸ There is good evidence that Sophocles had written paeans to Asclepius when he was introduced to Athens around 420 BCE. The exact relationship between the tragedian and the hero cult is unclear; see Andrew Connolly, “Was Sophocles Heroised as Dexion?” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 118 (1998): 1-21.

the poetic art but only the various stylistic devices will be politely criticized by the professional “musicians.” These professionals, Socrates says, will call what the amateurs know the necessary learnings to possess before the acquisition of the arts (269b), that is, learnings that are distinct from the *truly necessary* knowledge of the arts themselves. Indeed, when the “truly” professional orator—an Adrastus¹⁹⁹ or a Pericles—should hear about the things that the teachers of rhetoric have written in their books, they would persuade Phaedrus and Socrates to be lenient “if certain persons who are ignorant of dialectics have been unable to define the nature of rhetoric” and teach some accidental parts of the art as the whole art of rhetoric (269c). Once again, Socrates maintains that dialectic is the true art of speech that the true experts of speech possess. Unlike his previous demonstrations, however, Socrates now playfully co-opts the Asclepiads whom Phaedrus trusts into the true experts of speech by creating a resemblance between the art of the Asclepiads and the art of the “dialecticians.”

While Phaedrus seems to be swayed by this demonstration that invokes the judgements of experts whom he trusts, he unwittingly asks Socrates “how and from whom is the truly rhetorical and persuasive art to be acquired” (269d). Unsurprisingly, Phaedrus overlooks the most perfect (*teleōtatos*)²⁰⁰ rhetorician’s endorsement of dialectic. This compels Socrates to answer in a hilariously probabilistic manner: “whether one can acquire it, so as to become a perfect orator, Phaedrus, is probably and perhaps must be, dependent on conditions, like everything else” (ibid). Phaedrus will likely become a perfect orator not according to the dictates of art, but if he was “naturally rhetorical” and

¹⁹⁹ See Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.6.1-3, 3. 7. 1.

²⁰⁰ Pericles’ “perfection” is to be understood in the light of Socrates’ account of the philosopher’s initiation (*teletē*) in the palinode, which Phaedrus does not seem to remember. Cf. Brownstein, “Plato’s Phaedrus,” 397.

contributes to this natural advantage “knowledge and practice” (ibid).²⁰¹ Pericles, Socrates now says, became the most perfect rhetorician because he added to his great natural abilities “high thoughts” and the teachings about the mind that he had received from Anaxagoras through conversation (270a). This caricature of Pericles’ entanglement in philosophy probably appeals to Phaedrus’ understanding of philosophy as prate and high-browed conversation. If Phaedrus is unable to understand or remember dialectic in the philosophical sense, then Socrates should at least attempt to impress on him the legitimacy or the usefulness of philosophical conversations.

When Phaedrus demands clarification about Pericles’ philosophical training, Socrates takes the opportunity to outline a dialectical approach to the true art of rhetoric. To Phaedrus, of course, Socrates is describing how Anaxagoras had trained Pericles to become the most perfect orator. Here, Socrates identifies the analytical method that is used by both the doctors and the rhetoricians.²⁰² According to Socrates, to “impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses and training to give to the soul the desired belief and virtue,” both the doctor and the rhetorician must proceed in “a scientific manner, not merely by practice and routine” (270b). To produce bodily and mental well-being, both sets of experts must analyse the nature of the thing (or the “patient”) that is to be affected by the various instruments of their arts. Phaedrus nods his approval to Socrates’ collections of these arts’ shared analytical basis and eudemonistic orientation without much resistance. Unlike Thrasymachus, Phaedrus does not take issue with Socrates’ characterization of the arts as

²⁰¹ This description of the “ideal” rhetorician reminds of Isocrates’ famous speech; cf. Isocrates, *Against the Sophists* 10, 14.

²⁰² Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b.

eudemonic knowledge.²⁰³ When Socrates asks Phaedrus if it is possible to “acquire any appreciable knowledge of the nature of the soul without knowing the nature of the whole” (270c), Phaedrus recalls some teaching of Hippocrates the Asclepiad that “one cannot know the nature of the body, either, except in that way” (ibid). Judging from what Eryximachus shows about the Asclepiads’ knowledge about the whole in the *Symposium*—the bodily qualities of the entire cosmos understood in terms of contraries and harmonies²⁰⁴—it is probable that Phaedrus had misunderstood Socrates’ question. In accordance to Socrates’ following demonstrations about the simple or multiform nature of the soul and the corresponding forms of speech, Socrates’ question here is in truth about the nature of the soul as a whole rather than the nature of the entire cosmos.²⁰⁵ Unbeknownst to Phaedrus, the art of dialectic which Socrates endorses and the arts of the Asclepiads begin from different starting points or principles in the investigation of the nature of things.

As Socrates has done to the other “Asclepiads,” therefore, Hippocrates is also grouped willy-nilly with those who examine the nature of things according to true reason (*ho alēthēs logos*) or the art of dialectic. After all, Phaedrus is not well-versed in the theologizing arts of the Asclepiads to whom he is a friend. He is unable to resist Socrates’ playful cooptation of the Asclepiads or expose the false resemblances that Socrates creates between the arts of the Asclepiads and the art of dialectic. Unlike the true experts who would be able to expose the amateur’s attempt to persuade about one’s artfulness, Phaedrus the non-expert is easily deceived by the resemblances that Socrates makes.

²⁰³ Cf. *Republic* 343b-344c.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *Symposium* 188d.

²⁰⁵ For a similar interpretation of τῆς τοῦ ὅλου φύσεως, see Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 150.

According to Socrates, both Hippocrates the dialectician and true reason personified would begin their examination of the nature of the soul as they would begin to examine the nature of anything. To begin, they will examine if the thing is “simple or multiform” (270d). If the nature of the soul is simple and one, then one would proceed to examine its powers and affects as a uniform or simple being. If the soul is multipart or multiform or both, then one would proceed to count the various parts (and forms) and examine the powers and affects of each part. Just as it is necessary for the artful doctor to know the various powers and affects of the body, the nature of which is multipart and multiform, it is also necessary that the artful rhetorician knows the various powers and affects of the soul in relation to speech.

On the surface, Socrates’ speculations about the true art of rhetoric further establishes the inadequacies of the treatises on the art of rhetoric that teach stylistic devices as the whole of rhetoric. Since his speeches are always addressed to some soul, the expert rhetorician must know the true nature of the soul in terms of its various powers and affects in relation to speech.²⁰⁶ Only when the rhetorician has developed such an understanding of the soul, says the writer of Socrates’ supposed book on the art of rhetoric, would one be able to make “a practical application of a certain kind of speech in a certain way to persuade his hearer to action or belief,” knowing “the times for speaking and for keeping silence...the favourable occasions for...all the classes of speech which he has learned” (272a).²⁰⁷ On a deeper level, there is an implicit difficulty that needs to be resolved between what Socrates now says about truly artful rhetoric and the things that he

²⁰⁶ See Werner, “Rhetoric and Philosophy,” 29, 41.

²⁰⁷ See *Phaedrus* 276a.

has already said in the preceding discussion.²⁰⁸ To make sense of these apparently dissimilar (or “divided”) remarks about the true art of rhetoric, one is compelled to examine the qualities (powers and affects) of souls that could deceive and expose deception in contradistinction to souls that are powerlessly deceived by the resemblances that others make through speech.

Socrates does not explicitly demonstrate what he means by the powers and affects of the soul in relation to speech in either the synopsis of the dialectical approach to the true art of rhetoric or the supposed treatise on the art of rhetoric that follows. To resolve the abovementioned difficulty and to understand what Socrates means by the powers and affects of the soul in relation to speech, one is bound to take a hard look at what Plato’s written speech has shown. Those who teach the serious art of rhetoric, Socrates says, must first display (*deiknūnai*) the nature of the soul and make us see “whether it is one and all alike, or, like the body, of multiform aspect” (271a). Then, he will depict the various powers and affects of the soul and identify the reasons why certain kinds of speeches necessarily persuade some souls but not others. As this reading of the *Phaedrus* has shown, Socrates and Phaedrus have remarkably different kinds of souls and are affected or persuaded by remarkably different kinds of speeches. Whereas Phaedrus is characterized by his love for painless gratification, Socrates is affected by *erōs* of a strange kind for speech of a strange kind.²⁰⁹ Socrates craves a kind of speech that Phaedrus as a human being has necessarily experienced but is unlikely to remember without toil.²¹⁰ It is only when Socrates has recognized the characteristic powers and

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 260a, 261e.

²⁰⁹ See Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 449.

²¹⁰ See *Phaedrus* 250a.

affects of Phaedrus' soul—the things that Phaedrus can and cannot remember or understand—that Socrates decides to persuade him of the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows through deception. Since Socrates could not elevate Phaedrus' understanding of the art of rhetoric (or speech), Socrates is compelled to disguise philosophy or dialectic as the knowledge of the experts whom Phaedrus trusts to demonstrate the laboriousness of the true art of rhetoric. As such, Phaedrus' enthusiasm about Socrates' speculations that it would “be excellent” (271b) if the rhetorician is able to identify the different kinds of speeches that are able to persuade the different kinds of souls is painfully ironic. While Phaedrus imperturbably approves of Socrates' speculations about the true art of rhetoric, he is unaware of the more immediate consequences of what Socrates has just said. Phaedrus is not aware that Socrates could be speaking about his own toilsome attempt to identify and persuade Phaedrus' soul.

Indeed, after Phaedrus has heard Socrates' supposed treatise on the true art of rhetoric, he comments on the laboriousness of rhetoric as such (271c-272b). Socrates has been able to lead Phaedrus to question the approachable kind of rhetoric that he knows using his opinions about what truly artful pursuits are like. However, Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus about rhetoric—like when Phaedrus agrees to the dangerousness of rhetoric devoid of knowledge of the truth about good and evil²¹¹—does not entail the elevation of Phaedrus' understanding. Phaedrus can now grasp the toilsome path that one needs to take to attain the true art of rhetoric, but he is still oblivious to the moral worth of the experts' toils. At any rate, Socrates now attempts to complete his appraisal of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows. Whereas the earlier iteration of the

²¹¹ Ibid., 260c-d.

whole slew of stylistic devices can be seen as a division of the approachable kind of rhetoric into particulars, Socrates now collects them into one to be evaluated together as a kind of rhetoric that is characterized by its “short and smooth” path (272c). Since “nobody cares for truth” about “things which are just or good, or men who are so” (272d-e), says the supposed advocate of rhetoric of this kind, “a speaker must always aim at probability...for this method, if pursued throughout the whole speech, provides us with the entire art” (273a). Indeed, Phaedrus remembers that rhetoric of this kind was briefly mentioned before, though not to anyone’s surprise as he was the one who had recalled it in the first place (260a). Phaedrus remembers that this approachable kind of rhetoric does not require knowledge of the truth but only knowledge of the probable, or “that which most people think” (273b), but he does not remember Socrates’ earlier rejection of its artfulness. Nor indeed does Phaedrus recognize that this is the kind of rhetoric that Socrates has used to persuade him of the arduousness of the true art of rhetoric.

In his reply to the advocates of the approachable kind of rhetoric, “Tisias...or some other, whoever he may be and whatever country he is proud to call his own” (273c), Socrates reiterates some of his previous arguments. In this protreptic reply, Socrates undermines the legitimacy of the approachable kind of rhetoric by accounting for the acceptance of the probable during previous times due to its “likeness to truth” (273d), implying that something closer to the truth than the probable has since been discovered.²¹² Moreover, Socrates reiterates how it is “he who knows the truth” who “is

²¹² For an examination of the use of “probability arguments” by the Greek rhetoricians, see Michael Gagarin, “Probability and Persuasion: Plato and Early Greek Rhetoric,” in *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* eds. Ian Worthington (London: Routledge, 1994), 49. Gagarin does not identify “*to eikos*” or the probable with the opinions of the many. See also Susan E. Kinz, “Love’s Litigation: Plato’s Phaedrus as Trial by Jury,” *Duke Law Journal* 46, no. 4 (1997): 857.

always best able to discover likenesses” (273d) and persuade through the effective creation of such likenesses.²¹³ What differentiates this account from the previous iterations, however, is Socrates’ explicit identification of the previously concealed art of dialectic with the art of “disputation.” It is here that Plato finally allows his Socrates to identify dialectic as the art that allows the artful rhetorician to lead the souls of one’s audience through the creation or the exposition of the resemblances between different things. Instead of trying to elevate Phaedrus’ understanding of rhetoric, however, Socrates is now satisfied with a melodious declamation which undermines the approachable kind of rhetoric that is devoid of knowledge of the truth about the just, the good and the noble.²¹⁴

In addition to reiterating the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric, Socrates’ reply to its advocates also takes an indirect jab at the slavishness of rhetoric as such.²¹⁵ In contradistinction to Socrates who sees the gods as one’s good and noble masters whom one ought to gratify through speech and action, Tisias sought to gratify human and unworthy masters as if he is but a slave to his equals.²¹⁶ Since the gratification of one’s human masters with speech does not necessitate knowledge of the truth or an art of rhetoric that is informed by such knowledge, its practitioners and advocates will not toil at the examination of the nature of things. Those who use rhetoric to such ends necessarily toil at reaffirming the opinions of the masters with pleasant speeches that

²¹³ See *Phaedrus* 261d-e; see also Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a11.

²¹⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 261a.

²¹⁵ Cf. *Gorgias* 517a-519d.

²¹⁶ Compare “δεσπότηαις ἀγαθοῖς τε καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν” at *Phaedrus* 274a to “θεῶν μὲν οὖν ἵπποι τε καὶ ἡνίοχοι πάντες αὐτοὶ τε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν” at 246a-b. Clearly, the good and noble masters whom Tisias seeks to gratify are different from Socrates’ “good masters.”

would not offend the masters' tastes, regardless of their moral worth.²¹⁷ Here, Socrates terminates his melodious reply to the teachers of the approachable kind of rhetoric with a charming couplet, that "if the path is long, be not astonished; for it must be trodden for great ends, not for those you have in mind. Yet your ends also, as our argument says, will be best gained in this way, if one so desire" (274a). In this couplet, Socrates suggests that those who practice rhetoric to slavish ends will not seriously inquire into the nature of things. However, if one should wish to gratify one's human masters, Socrates says in passing, one would still have to take the toilsome journey of dialectic. It is also dialectic that allows one to identify the various opinions of one's human masters.

It is after his protreptic reply to the teachers of the approachable kind of rhetoric that Socrates states that they have had a "sufficient" discussion about the art of speech. Socrates' reply to those who take a "shorter and easier road to the art" (272c) terminated his attempt to demonstrate to Phaedrus the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric—that is, if the rhetorician must "know the truth about the matters of which he is to speak" (260a). While Phaedrus had failed to grasp the art of dialectic and its importance for all artful pursuits, his trust of the Asclepiads had allowed Socrates to impress on him the laboriousness of truly artful rhetoric and the unreliability of rhetoric devoid of knowledge of the truth. At the same time, Socrates' indirect criticism against Tisias' impiety for using rhetoric to gratify one's unworthy masters instead of the gods indicates a return to the initial charge of impiety against the speeches that reproved *erōs* (242d).²¹⁸ The sufficiency that has been reached in the discussion about the artfulness of speech, in

²¹⁷ Aside from Socrates' recent deception of Phaedrus, his first speech about *erōs* is also catered to Phaedrus' opinions and preferences, see 236a-b, 237b-d.

²¹⁸ Cf. *Apology*, 18c.

other words, has not satisfied Socrates' desire to honour the Muses through philosophical conversation.²¹⁹ The artful use of speech for the persuasion of Phaedrus does not exemplify the nobility of the philosopher's speeches after all. If the artful use of speech requires true knowledge about the subject of one's speech and the qualities of the souls of one's audience in relation to speech, then the discussion of the nobility of speechwriting—burdened with the great and noble task of pleasing the gods—is necessarily a discussion about the gods' delights in relation to speech.

VI. Socrates' examination of the propriety of writing

Socrates does not say that he himself knows about how to please the gods acting and speaking about speech or the nature of the gods' souls and what is pleasant to them.²²⁰ Instead, he relates to Phaedrus a story about two gods of ancient Egypt and their speeches of censure and praise about the invention of writing. The truth in this story, Socrates says, ought to be discovered to substitute the human opinions about writing so one might be able to make use of writing and the discoveries about writing in the appropriate manner. It is through this story that Socrates displays the truth about the gods' delights in relation to the things that are said and done about speech. In the story, Theuth of Naucratis in Egypt invents several arts to show Thamus, the god-king of all Egypt whom the Greeks call Ammon. As Theuth went through the benefits of each of his inventions, Thamus spoke of the nobility and the disgrace of each, praising some and reproving others. When writing is finally discussed, Theuth asserts that this learning "will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories: for it is an elixir of memory

²¹⁹ See *Phaedrus* 259c-e.

²²⁰ Socrates only presents an image of the nature of the gods' souls in the palinode at 246a-d. In contrast to human souls, the gods' souls are characterized by their uniformity and goodness.

of wisdom that I have discovered” (ibid). In response to Theuth’s claim, Thamus politely suggests that those who can beget the arts and those who can judge the arts’ benefits and harms to their users are different. As the father of writing, Thamus says, Theuth has been misled by one’s goodwill toward one’s own creations to misattribute to writings “a power the opposite of that which they really possess” (275a).²²¹ According to Thamus, writing is not an elixir (*pharmakon*) of memory but of reminding, for the users’ trust in writing, “produced by external characters which are no part of themselves,” will discourage them from using their “own memory within” (ibid). Moreover, Thamus claims that the invention of writing will give those who acquire the ability to read an appearance of wisdom instead of true wisdom: “they will read many things without instruction and they will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with” (275b).

This exchange between the Egyptian gods features two monologues instead of a dialogue as Socrates does not display Theuth’s reply to Thamus.²²² Theuth is not shown to defend his praise of writing against Thamus’ prophetic judgement which seems to reprove all writings. Theuth, the Egyptian god of all “logical” pursuits who closely resembles the Greek god Hermes, a known deceiver, does not respond to Thamus’ criticism by showing the way in which some writings *can* improve their audience’s memory and make them wiser. Theuth is silent about this possibility which Thamus does not exactly refute in his prophetic judgement about the power that writings have on the souls of those who read without instruction. While the story itself does not contain clarifications about the gods’ prophetic judgements, one is nonetheless compelled to

²²¹ Cf. Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

²²² For a different interpretation, see Burger, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 90-98.

approach these judgements as truly artful speeches. After all, these are supposed to be the prophesies of gods spoken with knowledge of the truth. One must be content, Socrates says, in one's simplicity "to hear an oak or a rock, provided only it spoke the truth," and not be deterred by who the speaker is and where he comes from (275c). Moreover, one must caution against the gods' deception, as they are knowers of the truth who can easily lead or mislead the hearers on with playful words (262d).

Indeed, Thamus' prophesy reminds of Phaedrus' judgement about those who pretend to be experts of medicine or music without true knowledge of the art (268b-c). These amateurs, as Phaedrus has said, were mad for imagining themselves to be true experts when they "really had no knowledge of the art," having only "read something in a book" (268c). It is due to its similarity to what he himself has said that Phaedrus agrees to Thamus' judgement: "I think the Theban is right in what he says about letters" (275c). It is important, however, to not take Phaedrus' agreement with Thamus as an indication that the agreement is based on the correct interpretation of the gods' judgements about writing. One must avoid being deceived by the reversal in the gods' judgements about writing as Phaedrus was deceived by Socrates' contrary judgements about *erōs*. To understand the means of gratifying the gods speaking and acting about speech, one must consider how certain kinds of writings will improve the audience's memory and make them wiser while others will make them forgetful and pretentious when all writings are collectively the instruments of reminding.

Instead of showing how the prophetic judgements of both gods about writing could be true, Socrates makes use of Phaedrus' agreement with Thamus to clarify the implications of Thamus' judgement. Both the one who writes on the art of writing and the

one who receives these writings “in the belief that anything in writing will be clear and certain,” Socrates says, “would be an utterly simple person, and in truth ignorant of the prophecy of Ammon, if he thinks written words are of any use except to remind him who knows the matter about which they are written” (275c-d). To avoid being ignorant about Thamus’ prophetic judgement about the power of writing, in other words, one must interpret it as a written speech that is necessarily unclear and uncertain in this manner. One must caution against the things that this ambiguous prophesy reminds of as if it is perfectly clear and certain.²²³

All writings, like painted animals that “stand like living beings” (275d), Socrates adds, have the appearance of vigor. However, if one “asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence,” for “they always say only one and the same thing”—even if you think that “they spoke as if they had intelligence” (ibid). Once it is written down or fixed in place, a speech is “bandied about” by both those who understand it and those for whom it is not at all fitting, for “it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak” (275e). Unlike a living person, the written word cannot examine or choose its readers prior to its “conversation” with them. Without the “power to protect or help itself” like some living thing, the written word “always needs its father to help it” if it is “ill-treated or unjustly reviled” (ibid). Despite their appearance of intelligence and vigor, all the writings that one leaves behind oneself are always fixed like some still-life painting, helpless and easy to misconstrue in the absence of its maker. In other words, all writings are easily abused by those who are not reminded of the things that the writers sought to remind through them. However, as Socrates now adds to his speculations, there is in truth a legitimate

²²³ Cf. Plutarch, *Nicias*, 13.1.

kind of speech “which shows itself to be the legitimate brother of this bastard one, both in the manner of its begetting and in its better and more powerful nature” (276a). The legitimate kind of speech, Socrates says, is written with knowledge in the soul of the learner, and “is able to defend itself and knows to whom it should speak, and before whom to be silent” (ibid). The writer of this legitimate kind of speech would possess a kind of knowledge that allows him to produce written speeches that are capable of “choosing” their readers and protecting themselves against unjust accusations. Through this addition, Socrates supplements his interpretation of Thamus’ judgement with an interpretation of Theuth’s judgement. Phaedrus, who is not aware of the reversal in Socrates’ claims and its consequences for his agreement with Thamus’ judgement, now utters in response the most ironic line in the dialogue: “you mean the living and breathing word of him who knows, of which the written word may justly be called the image” (276b). Not only is Phaedrus unaware of the fact that he speaks to Socrates the living and breathing word of one who does not know, he is doubly ignorant of Plato’s representation of his speech in writing as the image of the spoken word of one who does not know. Phaedrus painfully overlooks the risk that the living and breathing word of the knowers is silent to him. At the same time, Phaedrus’ response fails to capture the emphasis of Socrates’ claim. Whereas Socrates emphasizes the possibility of a legitimate kind of writing that has the power to remind or communicate with “a fitting soul” (276e), Phaedrus seems to be dwelling on the iconographic similarity between writings and the still-life paintings of animals.²²⁴

²²⁴ Ibid., 275d-e. Cf. Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, 239.

In response to Phaedrus' consistent receptiveness to imageries, Socrates now likens the writing of speeches to the sowing of seeds. The sensible farmer "who has seeds which he cares for and which he wishes to bear fruit," Socrates says, would not plant them in the heat of summer "in some garden of Adonis, and delight in seeing them appear in beauty in eight days" (276b). Rather, he would plant these valuable seeds in accordance with the art of farming in a serious manner, "in fitting ground, and be pleased when those which he had sowed reached perfection in the eighth month" (ibid). Such a farmer, in other words, would not sow the seeds that he cares for in unfitting grounds at unfitting times, causing the seeds to sprout in inappropriate circumstances and die fruitlessly. When an artful farmer does sow his seeds in unfitting ground at unfitting times—to practice sowing against the normal dictates of the art of farming—the farmer must be acting "only in play and for amusement" (276b). Here, Socrates draws an analogy between the artful farmer and the artful writer. The artful writer who possesses a kind of knowledge "of the just and the good and beautiful" (276c), Socrates asserts, is by no means less sensible about his seeds than the artful farmer. Like the artful farmer who would not sow the seeds that he cares for in unfitting ground at unfitting times, the artful writer would not sow through pen and ink words "which cannot defend themselves by argument and cannot teach the truth effectually" (ibid). The serious or legitimate writings of the artful writer, like the serious seeds of the artful farmer, must be sown in fitting places at fitting times to allow for fruition. In contrast to the seeds of the artful farmer, however, writings are not sown into a single place or received by a single soul at a single time. The writings that one leaves behind can probably survive longer than seeds and are necessarily received by various kinds of souls which may or may not receive the writings

in the appropriate manner—that is, to be reminded of the things that one seeks to remind through them. Therefore, the artful writer must acknowledge and reckon with this inevitable uncertainty and take pains to communicate to those who can be reminded of what one seeks to remind through one’s writings.²²⁵

If the seriousness of the experts’ disseminations²²⁶ depends on the extent to which one’s seeds are sowed in the appropriate circumstances that allow for fruition and replanting, then the experts are acting playfully whenever their seeds are deliberately planted in an unfruitful manner. This is the playfulness of the local divinities that had deceived Phaedrus through Socrates’ “disputative” speeches about *erōs*. Since Phaedrus did not commit the definitions of *erōs* in Socrates’ speeches to memory when he had heard them, he was unable to examine the relationships between the various definitions of *erōs* as madness. Socrates inadvertently or playfully deceived Phaedrus through these speeches to the extent that he was unfitted to remember or reflect on the serious or dialectical insights that had been revealed through them.²²⁷ Indeed, it is Phaedrus’ inability to understand the art of dialectic that compelled Socrates to persuade him of the arduousness of the true art of rhetoric in a rather deceptive way. As someone who knows about the differences between the art of dialectic and the arts of the Asclepiads, the degree of those differences, and the qualities of Phaedrus’ soul to which his speech is directed at, Socrates was able to create the false resemblance between the arts in Phaedrus’ mind and establish both the arduousness of the true art of rhetoric and the

²²⁵ Hence I disagree with those who use these passages as evidence for the existence of Plato’s “Unwritten Doctrines.” Cf. Krämer, *The Foundations of Metaphysics*, 191-196; Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 39-50, 85-93.

²²⁶ For an insightful discussion of the farming analogy in the dialogues, see Jacob A. Howland, “Plato’s Politic Writing and the Cultivation of Souls” in *Plato as Author: The Rhetoric of Philosophy*, ed. Ann Michelini (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 77-98.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 265c-d.

legitimacy of philosophical conversations. Because Phaedrus is unsuited for the true art of speech or the toilsome journey of philosophy, Socrates was compelled to take the “short and smooth” path in his persuasion of Phaedrus about rhetoric.

Since he would not readily find suitable audience for his speeches, Socrates now says, the artful writer would plant the “garden of letters...for amusement, and will write, when he writes, to treasure up reminders for himself, when he comes to the forgetfulness of old age” (276d).²²⁸ Unsurprisingly, Phaedrus appreciates the painless pleasures that are associated with these leisurely writings. For Phaedrus, it is a noble pastime that Socrates speaks of, to be able to “find amusement in discourse, telling stories about justice, and other subjects of which you speak” (276e). While Socrates concedes to Phaedrus that he is right to think the way he does about such writings, he turns, once again, to the other possibility in the true division of speech.²²⁹ Serious speech about the good, the just and the beautiful, Socrates asserts, “is far nobler” (ibid). When the artful writer is writing seriously, Socrates says, he would employ the art of dialectic to sow fitting speeches about these things into fitting souls. When this happens, there will “spring up in other minds other words capable of continuing the process forever, and which make their possessor happy, to the farthest possible limit of human happiness” (277a).

It is here that Socrates provides a summary of the agreements that have been reached in this discussion of speech. Once again, Socrates emphasizes the importance of the art of dialectic. As Socrates says, it is the same art of dialectic that allows one to both

²²⁸ Since the philosophical writer can be reminded of things that he sought to remind through his own writings, they are playful in a different sense. Once again, one is compelled to differentiate between the apparently similar things in what Socrates says. The ability of such “playful” pastime speeches to inspire “new growth” is to be compared to the fecundity of the philosopher’s serious speeches and the infertility of Midas’ epitaph, cf. *Phaedrus* 264d, 276e-277a.

²²⁹ Ibid., 260a. Rather than the apparent division between speaking and writing, Socrates’ true division of speech is between the noble and the base.

speak and write speeches in an artful manner, “offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul” (277c). Until one knows the truth “about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes” and the various powers and affects of speeches and souls, one will not be able to make use of speech to the greatest extent according to nature, “either for the purposes of instruction or of persuasion” (ibid). Despite Socrates’ reemphasis of the things that has been revealed (*memēnuken*) by the entire discussion, Phaedrus does not at all reflect on the kinds of speeches that Socrates has used to persuade him. Indeed, Phaedrus’ passivity toward Socrates’ remarks in this part of the dialogue reminds of the overall drowsiness at the end of the *Symposium*.²³⁰ Instead of wine, however, it is the summer’s heat that is inducing Socrates’ interlocutor to sleep.

After the summary, Socrates decides to return to Phaedrus’ initial question if the profession of speechwriting is truly a disgrace. Having elevated the examination of the nobility of speechwriting to an examination of the nobility of all productions of speech—both spoken and written—Socrates’ longwinded response has consistently misinterpreted Phaedrus’ meaning.²³¹ In response to the politician’s censure of Lysias, Phaedrus’ initial question was concerned with the reputation of the profession of speechwriting as opposed to the moral worth of the art of speech. For Socrates, however, the examination of the nobility and disgrace of speechwriting is necessarily an examination of the moral worth of the kind of rhetoric that is employed—irrespective of the reputation that it enjoys in the

²³⁰ Cf. *Symposium* 223c-d.

²³¹ Indeed, the discussion of the art of speech in the *Phaedrus* is organized in a chiasmic manner. This “A-B-B-A” structure reminds of the boustrophedon inscriptions on the Chest of Cypselus; cf. *Phaedrus* 236b; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.17.6.

city.²³² Indeed, Socrates' examination of the art of speech is not at all limited to the writings of the speechwriter. Instead, it is an open letter addressed to "Lysias or anyone else ever wrote or shall ever write, in private, or in public."²³³

Socrates' brief remarks here about the disgraces of a writer seem to integrate several observations. The claim that it is a disgrace to the writer to believe that one's writing "possesses great certainty and clearness" (277d) reminds of the story of the Egyptian gods and Socrates' speculations about the serious writings of the artful writer. The placement of this claim fits well with Socrates' earlier suggestion that "we have still to speak of propriety and impropriety in writing" (274b). To write in an appropriate or fitting manner, the artful writer must examine the various powers and affects of speech in relation to the various powers and affects of the soul. However, Socrates' following claim seems to go beyond the discussion of the propriety of speech. His claim that "ignorance of right and wrong and good and bad is in truth inevitably a disgrace, even if the whole mob applaud it" (277d-e) reminds of the limitations of the approachable kind of rhetoric.²³⁴ These points were discussed prior to the apparent turn toward the propriety of "writing."²³⁵ By combining the observations about the artfulness and the propriety of speech (both spoken and written), Socrates fuses the moral and the communicative parts of the true art of speech into a single whole. Here, one cannot help but imagine the scrutinizing gaze of Socrates as he examines one's writings in terms of their moral worth and communicative power.

VII. Socrates' prayers

²³² Cf. *Phaedrus* 249d-e, 274c.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 277d; see also 258d, 261d-e.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 260c-262b.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 277e-278a.

With the help of an agreeable interlocutor who is probably falling asleep, Socrates now shifts from the writer's disgraces to the disgraces of those who receive writings.²³⁶ To avoid acting disgracefully in one's reception of writings, Socrates says, one must recognize that "in the written word there is necessarily much that is playful," and that no written speech "whether in metre or in prose, deserves to be treated very seriously" (277e). What Socrates now says about the noble reception of writings is no less enigmatic than the prophetic judgements of the gods about the invention of writing. On the one hand, Socrates asserts that one ought to avoid making a big deal of the written word because "the best of them really serve only to remind us of what we know."²³⁷ On the other hand, Socrates prays that he and Phaedrus would become the kind of receiver of writings who would clearly see the "words about justice and beauty and goodness spoken by teachers for the sake of instruction and really written in a soul."²³⁸ To resolve the apparent contradiction between the playfulness of all writings and Socrates' wish to be able to recognize the seriousness of *some* writings—the riddle of the *Phaedrus*—one must recall the horticultural image and what it shows about the playful and the serious. There is much that is playful in all writings because it is necessary that some if not most readers will not be reminded of the things that their writers sought to remind through them. And whenever the writing does contain serious teachings about "justice and beauty and goodness" (ibid), it is only for those who can be reminded of them through reading or listening that it becomes clear and worthy of seriousness.

²³⁶ Indeed, Socrates' remarks in this part of the conversation are very brief and very vague, as if they were spoken in someone's dream. The laconic who speaks in such riddles is Apollo, see 260e, 265b; cf. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 34; see also Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato*, 39.

²³⁷ *Phaedrus* 278a.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Indeed, it is difficult to know how Phaedrus understands Socrates' prayer. After all, he did not understand the first of such prayers when Socrates offered it at the end of the palinode,²³⁹ nor will he raise questions before sharing in Socrates' prayers when Socrates prays for the third time—at the end of their conversation. Since he listens to what Socrates says without demand for clarification,²⁴⁰ Phaedrus is ignorant of what he is praying for.²⁴¹ After Phaedrus claims that he would share in Socrates' prayer to become someone who would receive speeches knowing the differences between the playful and the serious, Socrates says that “we have amused ourselves with talk” about speech in a measured manner.²⁴² Indeed, the conversation between the two has been playful as neither was well-suited to communicate to the other about speech. Though the two had tread the same idyllic path beyond the city walls because of their shared love of speech, it has become quite clear that they love different kinds of speeches for different reasons. At the end of the day, Phaedrus is unable to learn from Socrates the way to become a renowned speechwriter like Lysias, nor is Socrates able to persuade Phaedrus to pursue the life of philosophy.

In response to Socrates' advice that he should go and report to Lysias the things that they had heard at “the fountain and sacred place of the nymphs,”²⁴³ Phaedrus jests by telling Socrates that his own noble or beautiful friend should not be passed by. If all must engage in philosophy to avoid speaking and acting disgracefully about speech, then Isocrates—the budding rhetorician whom Socrates apparently loves—should also hear what

²³⁹ Ibid., 257b.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 277e-278a: “This applies also to the recitations of the rhapsodes, delivered to sway people's minds, without opportunity for questioning and teaching.”

²⁴¹ Cf. *Second Alcibiades* 138a-c.

²⁴² *Phaedrus* 278b.

²⁴³ Ibid., 278b-c.

was said. Since he asks Socrates *what* they are to say that Isocrates is, Phaedrus seems to identify Socrates' protreptic advice with the politician's censure of Lysias as a speechwriter. Instead of calling Isocrates a "philosopher" or a "speechwriter," however, Socrates offers a prophetic judgement about what Isocrates might become. Since it seems to Socrates that Isocrates "has a nature above the speeches of Lysias and possesses a nobler character," it would not surprise Socrates if he excels all who have ever engaged in writing, and make them "seem less than children" (279a). At the same time, it seems to Socrates that these things "will not satisfy him" because "a more divine impulse will lead him to greater things," for "something of philosophy is inborn in his mind" (279a-b). Socrates, in other words, prophesizes about Isocrates' career in relation to the qualities of Isocrates' soul. Since Isocrates' nature is mixed with nobler customs or dispositions, he is therefore unfitted for receiving or imitating Lysias' base speeches. It would not surprise Socrates if Isocrates should excel all who have ever engaged in writing as he grows older. However, if the writings of the older Isocrates can potentially surpass the writings of his predecessors only because of his superior nature, then Socrates has not in truth prophesized about the nobility or disgrace of the writings of the older Isocrates. Indeed, the prediction that the older Isocrates will not be satisfied by his superior writings and be led by a "more divine impulse...to greater things" (279b) suggests that these superior writings of the older Isocrates would not yet be noble or artful in the philosophical sense.

While both messages—the one Phaedrus would carry to his beloved Lysias and this one that Socrates will carry to his "beloved" Isocrates—appear to encourage a turn towards philosophy, the prophetic message for Isocrates does sound less hostile. Whereas Socrates' prophesy for Isocrates is not yet a direct criticism, Lysias and his colleagues are

perceptibly criticized for being ignorant of the truth and for not offering things of great worth in their writings. Socrates' prophetic message to Isocrates—like the Egyptian gods' prophecies about writings—is as encomiastic as prophecies can be. Isocrates would be suitably praised as a philosopher if he will show “by his own speech that the written words are of little worth” in comparison to “the serious pursuit which underlies them” (278c-d), but he would be criticized as a “poet or writer of speeches or of laws” if he will have “nothing more valuable than the things he has composed or written (278e). Again, it is unclear if this is how Phaedrus has understood what Socrates has said. It is unclear if Phaedrus recognizes the applicability of Socrates' prophesy for Isocrates for himself. Without much desire for further questioning or clarification, Phaedrus suggests that they should go, “since the heat has grown gentler” (279b). Seeing how Phaedrus is captured by the summer's charm and not at all affected by his protreptic message, Socrates asks Phaedrus if it wouldn't be fitting to pray to the divinities before they go. It is fitting for Socrates to pray to the divinities in Phaedrus' presence before they leave because Phaedrus has consistently shared in his prayers but would not share in his love of wisdom. In Socrates' third and last prayer, he prays to “beloved Pan and all ye other gods of this place,” that they might allow him to become beautiful within, and to have as much from without as is friendly or harmonious with his “inner man” (279c), that “may I consider the wise man rich; and may I have such wealth as only the self-restrained man can bear or endure” (ibid). Though Phaedrus, like before, did not raise questions before sharing in Socrates' prayer, this prayer is noticeably different from the previous two. Whereas the previous prayers had been playful as Phaedrus was in truth unable to understand that it is dialectic which allows those prayers to come true, this last prayer is

more serviceable to Phaedrus and is therefore a more serious prayer for him. Though Phaedrus probably did not think much about how one might be made beautiful within,²⁴⁴ he is nonetheless easily overburdened by toilsome pursuits when the writing of speeches for money is certainly one of them. For Phaedrus, it is unwise to pursue anything that seems burdensome, and wisdom for Phaedrus is in truth no different from the indulgence in a wealth of painless pleasures.²⁴⁵

VIII. Plato's display of rhetoric about speech and the art of philosophical writing

At the end of the day, Socrates has failed to persuade Phaedrus to lead a life of philosophy. Like everyone else, Phaedrus can only be reminded of things that he already knows (and remembers) and be persuaded by what he trusts to be true. Unlike the teachers of rhetoric, Socrates does not characterize the true art of rhetoric or dialectic as a painless or approachable pursuit. Socrates fails to gratify Phaedrus' preference for painless pleasures and does not exploit Phaedrus' failings for material gain. Though Socrates' *ad hoc* persuasion of Phaedrus about the laboriousness of truly artful rhetoric is premised on Phaedrus' inability to understand the true art of speech or dialectic, it does challenge Phaedrus to question the assertion that truly artful rhetoric does not require knowledge of the truth—at least for now. The philosopher's art of rhetoric, in other words, is not the ability to persuade everyone of the same thing with the same speech. Rather, it is the ability to use the appropriate kind of speech to persuade souls of various kinds to the same moral end. If Phaedrus cannot be led to pursue philosophy and be benefited

²⁴⁴ For a more holistic interpretation of Socrates' last prayer that explores the significance of Pan, see T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Plato's Prayer to Pan (Phaedrus 279b8-c3)," *Hermes*, 90. Bd., H. 1(1962): 34-44.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 598-602.

from that endeavour, then Socrates should at least defuse the harmful opinions that he holds to be true by exposing their dissimilarities to the truth.

Indeed, much of the action that takes place in this discussion of speech is deliberately concealed. Socrates does not soliloquize to the audience about Phaedrus' failings, nor is there a chorus to provide clarification on the action of the dialogue. Since the *Phaedrus* is a "performed dialogue,"²⁴⁶ there is not even a narrator to lean on. At the same time, however, Plato leaves many clues in this discussion of speech to allow his audience to examine his philosophical writings in a serious or appropriate manner.

To uncover the unspoken action of this dialogue, as Socrates shows in this examination of speech, one could examine the various speeches that Plato displays in relation to the souls of the various characters (270e). Since every part of a dialogue—the various speeches of the various characters—is addressed to some soul, one must interpret the various speeches in relation to the various powers and affects of the soul (271a), "showing the causes of the effects produced and why one kind of soul is necessarily persuaded by certain classes of speeches, and another is not" (271b). To detect what Socrates thinks and does but does not reveal through speech, in other words, one must examine Socrates' speeches using the art of dialectic that Socrates loves (266b). For instance, when Socrates identifies Phaedrus as someone whom he should persuade through the creation of a deceptive resemblance between the various "arts," Socrates is relying on what he has learned by "collecting" and "dividing" the nature of the soul, its identity and multiformity, and the various powers and affects of the soul in relation to speech (271c-272b). Indeed, it is also the art of dialectic that allows one to unriddle the

²⁴⁶ Strauss, *City and Man*, 58-62.

gods' contrary judgements about the *power* of writing and Socrates' contradicting interpretations of these judgements in relation to the soul of the recipients of writings. As Socrates' interpretation of the gods' judgements shows, it is absurd to speak of the power of any written speech if one does not also consider the nature of the soul that is to receive it.

The observation that every speech is inevitably “bandied about” by those for whom it is not fitting once it is written down like some painted animal,²⁴⁷ therefore, did not compel Plato to commit his “true doctrines” to oral transmission.²⁴⁸ The “particular literary form which Plato invented for his Socratic discourses,” in other words, “is not merely a clever hiding place for his ‘doctrines’; it is a profoundly meaningful expression of them within the possibilities which the art of writing allows.”²⁴⁹ Since the gods' riddling remarks about writing can only be accurately understood if the audience engages in the “serious pursuit”²⁵⁰ which underlies Plato's philosophical writing, Plato in truth “employs the dialectic method and plants and sow in a fitting soul”²⁵¹ the philosopher's art of thinking or dialectic. By displaying Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus of speech in this way, Plato allows his audience to compare the various “arts” of speech and their various powers in relation to the human soul and examine for themselves the moral worth of each. In short, Plato's artful display of the philosopher's rhetoric about speech reminds one of the harms of the approachable kind of rhetoric and the need to pursue knowledge of the truth and the truth about good and evil.

²⁴⁷ *Phaedrus* 275d-e.

²⁴⁸ See Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 39-50, 85-93.

²⁴⁹ Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 95.

²⁵⁰ *Phaedrus* 278d.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 276e.

In the rest of this dissertation, I shall further demonstrate Plato's dissemination of the philosopher's art of thinking in the dialogues, that is, the serious action of Plato's philosophical writing. Though the display of rhetoric about speech in the *Phaedrus* allows one to imitate Socrates in one's examination of speech (both spoken and written), it does not allow for a thorough examination of the nature of Plato's philosophy or why Plato sought to disseminate the philosopher's art of thinking through writing. To grasp the nature of the philosopher's love of wisdom in terms of both power and *affect*, one must also examine Socrates' speeches about *erōs* and Plato's display of these speeches by using the philosophers' art of thinking. What is the human defect²⁵² that necessitates the philosopher's art of thinking? And what is the motivation behind Plato's dissemination of philosophy as such?

In both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, Socrates praises philosophical *erōs* as a divine affect (or inspiration) of the soul that induces the philosopher to pursue knowledge of the truth about the highest things. In both speeches, Socrates characterizes the philosopher's love of wisdom as the result of the philosopher's recollections of one's deepest longings as a human being. Since Socrates recognizes that the human or lower teachings about the highest things will inevitably fall short of the truth, he necessarily praises or defends the philosopher's erotic pursuit of the highest things as a godlike way of life. By displaying Socrates' praises of *erōs* beside the other speeches, Plato allows his audience to compare a wide range of human affections and the rhetorical expressions of those affections. It is by examining the various teachings about *erōs* in a philosophical

²⁵² Cf. *Republic* 342a.

manner that one arrives at an accurate understanding of Socrates' praise of the philosopher's love of wisdom and the erotic impetus of Plato's philosophical writing.

Chapter 3

Censure and Praise of *Erōs* in the *Phaedrus*

Prior to the discussion of speech, Plato displays in the *Phaedrus* three speeches of censure and praise about *erōs*. Though the exchanges between the interlocutors before and between the speeches underscore much of the evolving dramatic situation, the various things that are accomplished through the speeches are very much concealed. Why is Phaedrus charmed by Lysias' speech? What does Socrates accomplish in his censure of *erōs*, and how does Socrates recant this speech through the palinode? To reveal the unspoken action of the speeches about *erōs*, I rely on the insights that can be attained through the close reading of the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*. By examining these speeches of praise and blame about *erōs* in a dialectical manner,²⁵³ this chapter further demonstrates Plato's dissemination of the philosopher's art of thinking through writing. While Socrates' first speech in the *Phaedrus* exposes the deceptive eroticism of Lysias' clever censure of *erōs*, it is Socrates' palinode that encourages the audience to examine the nature of things in a philosophical manner. Unlike the palinode, the first two speeches fail to consider a kind of *erōs* that motivates us as human beings to reflect on the nature of *erōs* and the speeches about *erōs* that one comes across. In other words, it is only the philosopher's love of wisdom that goads us to examine the moral worth of *erōs* and *logos* as complex phenomena that might benefit us or lead us astray. Viewed from the perspective of the myth of the palinode, where the philosophical lover is compelled to persuade his beloved to lead the life of philosophy,²⁵⁴ Plato's display of the speeches about *erōs* in the *Phaedrus* constitutes an instance of the philosopher's "initiation into the

²⁵³ *Phaedrus* 264e-266c.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 253a-256a.

mysteries of love,” which is said to bring “happiness from the inspired lover to the loved one, if he be captured” (253c).

I. *The prologue*

As many scholars agree, the conversation between Phaedrus and Socrates prior to the reading of Lysias’ speech contains important information about the dramatic setting of the dialogue.²⁵⁵ Socrates, a man “who is sick with the love of discourse” (228b) is led by a refined speech about *erōs* to venture beyond the city walls away from his haunts within. Along the Ilissos toward their destined place under the plane tree, the interlocutors converse about the myth of Boreas²⁵⁶ and Oreithyia.²⁵⁷ Since Socrates is not yet capable of living according to the Delphic injunction “to know myself” (229e) he simply accepts or obeys the customary things that are said about these things. Instead of trying to account for the “forms of the Centaurs, and then that of the Chimera, and...a whole crowd of such creatures” (229d), Socrates seeks to examine himself to know if he is a creature more complicated and furious than Typhon or one “to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature” (230a). Instead of accounting for the natures of such wondrous creatures in an unorthodox manner, Socrates examines his own nature as a human being and pursues self-knowledge²⁵⁸ even if his findings would contradict the

²⁵⁵ See Benardete, *Morality and Philosophy*, 106-115; Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato’s Phaedrus*, 17-44; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 95-98.

²⁵⁶ Hesiod, *Works and Days* 503-566.

²⁵⁷ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.211-224. Oreithyia is said to have borne to Boreas two sons, Zetes and Calaïs, who sailed with Jason upon the Argo.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in the Phaedrus*, 42-44, 116, 181-201. While I agree to Griswold’s emphasis that the philosopher’s pursuit of “self-knowledge” is an important theme of this dialogue, I do not share Griswold’s interpretation and distrust of Plato’s art of dialectic. As my interpretation of the text will show, Plato’s art of dialectic is not limited to the kind of “technicism” which Griswold rejects. From Plato’s point of view, the differentiation between human *technē* and true knowledge of the whole—the point which Griswold emphasizes throughout his insightful book—is itself an exercise of dialectic. See also Benardete, *Morality and Philosophy*, 103-105; Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, 219-221.

established opinions or customs.²⁵⁹ At the “sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous” (230b-c) Socrates listens and responds to Lysias’ clever speech about *erōs* because he wishes to acquire knowledge or wisdom about his own nature.²⁶⁰ Socrates wishes to learn if Lysias had composed a persuasive speech about *erōs* that could inform him of what *erōs* is, the benefits and harms of *erōs*, and how best to act in love affairs.

II. Lysias’s censure of erōs

When Socrates examines the speeches about *erōs* in the discussion of speech, he says that there are many things in Lysias’ speech that would be “useful examples to consider, though not exactly to imitate” (264e). These aspects of the speech are skipped over in that discussion because Socrates wished to avoid burdening Phaedrus with further criticisms against Lysias whom he clearly admires. While Phaedrus objects to the analogy that Socrates makes between Lysias’ speech and Midas’ epitaph, Socrates’ questions about the “logographic necessity” of the speech—why Lysias’ speech begins at the end of some love affair and is composed of parts that are “thrown out helter-skelter” (264b)—seem to have eluded Phaedrus. In other words, Socrates was unable to lead Phaedrus to reflect on the persuasiveness of Lysias’ censure of *erōs* in relation to the qualities of his own soul—that is, to examine Lysias’ speech as a philosopher would.²⁶¹

This interpretation of Lysias’ speech will respond to Socrates’ unanswered questions and

²⁵⁹ See *Phaedrus* 249d-e.

²⁶⁰ See Christopher Moore, “How to ‘Know Thyself’ in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Aperion* 47, no. 3 (2014): 390-418. Moore offers a persuasive account of the significance of the myth-rectification “episode.” Instead of completely discrediting the investigation of the underlying dynamism of phenomena and speech, Socrates “treats myths as the starting-point for some of his own investigations...prefatory to a complete investigation of himself” (400). It is my contention that Plato’s examination of myth (or speech) and soul relies on the Socratic art of dialectic.

²⁶¹ See *Phaedrus* 270c-d.

thus examine it as Socrates would. Most importantly, it will consider the ends and means of Lysias' speech in relation to the affections of Phaedrus' soul.

While numerous scholars have correctly identified the selfish implications of the argument of Lysias' speech about *erōs* and its failure to persuade,²⁶² Phaedrus' admiration of the speech and what this shows about Phaedrus' soul are often overlooked.²⁶³ It is my contention that Lysias' speech successfully charms Phaedrus because it affirms Phaedrus' engrained beliefs about both artful rhetoric and how best to act in love affairs. As such, Socrates, who is "wholly ignorant" (264b) about Lysias' art of rhetoric, does not reveal the complete truth about Lysias' speech in his comments about its apparent lack of organization.²⁶⁴ Through his well-adorned speech, Lysias successfully persuades Phaedrus to gratify or befriend him by reminding Phaedrus of the "benefits" that an eloquent non-lover enjoys in love affairs. However, by relying on Phaedrus' established beliefs or opinions to persuade him to become yet another unerotic speechwriter like himself, Lysias fails to produce "legitimate offspring" (278a) through his speech insofar as both the speech itself and its offspring will necessarily "feed upon opinion" (248b). Because of its total censure of *erōs*, Lysias' speech is perhaps the most anti-philosophical of the speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays in the dialogues. If Lysias the speechwriter is seriously committed to the unerotic way of life that he praises, then neither he nor those whom he persuades with his speech would ever pursue the "long and rough road" towards knowledge of the truth (272c), and "attain an art of speech which is ridiculous, and not an art at all" (262c).

²⁶² See Rosen, *Philosophy and Poetry*, 90; Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, 26-28.

²⁶³ For notable exceptions, see Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus*, 22-23; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 99.

²⁶⁴ Cf. C. J. Rowe, *Plato: Phaedrus* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1986), 144-145.

A. The aim of Lysias' speech

According to Phaedrus' initial remarks, Lysias' speech depicts someone tempting one of the beauties, and that the speech is clever or embellished because the tempter is not a lover but a non-lover who argues that "favours should be granted rather to the one who is not in love than the lover" (227c). If Lysias assumes the role of the "unerotic" tempter in his own speech, then the aim of Lysias' speech is to persuade the unnamed beauty to gratify or befriend him instead of the others who are lovers. Since Phaedrus does assume the role of the beloved in Socrates' speeches that respond to Lysias' speech,²⁶⁵ it is not inaccurate to identify Phaedrus as the beauty that is being tempted in Lysias' speech. According to this understanding, Lysias' speech aims to persuade Phaedrus to gratify and befriend him because he as a non-lover is more beneficial to Phaedrus than Phaedrus' lovers. However, as Lysias begins his speech by reminding its audience of what they know about his "business" as a speechwriter (230e), it would be inaccurate to restrict the aim of his speech to the persuasion of Phaedrus about the benefits and harms related to *erōs* or whom he should gratify and befriend. In addition to the explicit advice that he offers about love affairs, Lysias is also preoccupied with the demonstration of his abilities as a competent speechwriter who can defend difficult or unorthodox positions with speech.²⁶⁶ Against the lovers' typical claims about the benefits that they bring to their beloveds and the legitimacy of their demands for reciprocity, Lysias seeks to demonstrate through his speech his ability to defend the unorthodox position about the merits of non-lovers, who are under no compulsion to gratify or

²⁶⁵ See *Phaedrus* 243e.

²⁶⁶ Indeed, Phaedrus' reading of Lysias' speech reminds of the indirect role of the Greek speechwriters in the courts and assemblies. See Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus*, 19-21; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 100.

reciprocate. Lysias aims to persuade Phaedrus to become an unerotic speechwriter like himself by reminding Phaedrus of the benefits that such a speechwriter could receive through words.

B. The organization of Lysias' speech

As Socrates notes in the discussion of speech that follows, Lysias does not begin his speech with some definition of what *erōs* is or the things that might take place at the beginning of some love affair. Rather, he “begins with what the lover would say at the end to his beloved” and “undertakes to swim on his back up the current of his discourse from its end” (264a).²⁶⁷ Indeed, Lysias' speech begins with repenting lovers who are thinking back on the “benefits they have conferred, and...the trouble they have had” when their desire ceases (231a). From the termination of such a wretched love affair, the speech moves “backwardly” to the things that the lovers do to gratify their beloveds (231c), the public display of the love affair (232a), the exclusivity that is demanded by the lovers (232c), and finally, the bodily passion that motivates the lovers' pursuit of their beloveds (232e). From there, Lysias draws from this “backwards” chronological demonstration to produce the “horizontal” demonstration (233a-234c) that it is more beneficial to gratify him than it is to gratify one's lovers. To the extent that this latter demonstration repeats the benefits of the non-lovers and the troubles that the lovers create for themselves and their beloveds, Lysias indeed exhibits “his ability to say the same thing in two different ways” (235a).

In addition to beginning at the end of some love affair, Lysias' speech also proceeds in opposite pairs that highlight the benefits that the non-lovers receive in

²⁶⁷ Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 410-4.

contradistinction to the harms that the lovers suffer. Like a swimmer who is using the backstroke technique to climb upstream, Lysias' speech rotates its "torso" at various paces to execute the catch and pull. With steady strokes, Lysias travels from the end of the love affair towards its beginning; each "rotation" features a comparison between the actions (and affects) of the lovers and the non-lovers during the different stages of the love affair. When he reaches the beginning of the love affair in this way—at the "top of the stream"—Lysias employs a few quick successions of "not A, but B" couplets to cover the distance,²⁶⁸ evoking the points that he had made during the steadier part of his "swim."²⁶⁹ Floating in the water, Lysias ends this "exhaustive"²⁷⁰ speech by addressing his bespattered spectators: "Now I think I have said enough. But if you feel any lack, or think anything has been omitted, ask questions" (234c). While this is the organization of Lysias' speech that is revealed by what Socrates says in the discussion of speech, Phaedrus is not shown to reflect on this maritime imagery and what it shows about Lysias' art of speech. Rather than identifying Lysias' speech with some amateur's swim, Phaedrus is overwhelmed by the verbal splashes that is created by Lysias' "swim." Instead of a systematic depiction a narrow conception of *erōs*, Phaedrus thinks that Lysias "has omitted none of the points that belonged to the subject, so that nobody could ever speak about it more exhaustively or worthily than he has done" (235b).

C. Lysias' persuasion of Phaedrus about *erōs* and *logos*

²⁶⁸ For a discussion of the use of this conjunction in the extant works of Lysias, see George E. Dimock, Jr., "Alla in Lysias and Plato's *Phaedrus*," *The American Journal of Philology* 73, no. 4 (1952): 381-396. Both the historical Lysias and the Lysias whom Plato parodies, Dimock notes, employ the conjunction to create deceptive antitheses that allows one to eat one's cake and have it too (392).

²⁶⁹ The post-climactic part of Lysias' speech reminds of the post-climactic part of Sisyphus' climb. The quick successions of rhyming couplets—interspersed with less exciting narrative—resembles the struggles of an unfit swimmer who is trying to stay afloat. Cf. Euripides, *Medea*, 405, 1381. Euripides' *Medea* identifies Jason with Sisyphus.

²⁷⁰ Note the play on words at 235b; *πλείω* (more) reminds of *πλέω* (to sail, swim or float).

Instead of some definition of *erōs* that explicitly delimits the phenomenon to suit his speech, therefore, Lysias begins his speech with the final grievance of many love affairs—the “breakup.” And by beginning at the end of some love affair and the quarrel between these unnamed “exes,” Lysias tacitly makes use of a famous “love story” that Phaedrus²⁷¹ would know: the myth of Jason and Medea.²⁷² Like Lysias’ speech, Euripides’ version of this famous myth²⁷³ also begins with the lovers’ terminal quarrel: “now all is enmity, and love’s bonds are diseased.”²⁷⁴ Jason the iconic non-lover had recently married into the royal household of Corinth to the dismay of his “ex-wife” Medea, the iconic lover. Like the lovers in Lysias’ speech who “consider the injury they have done to their own concerns on account of their love, and the benefits they have conferred” (231b) Medea also relates her past sufferings and toils to the newlywed Jason:

I saved your life—as witness all the Greeks who went on board the Argo with you—when you were sent to master the fire-breathing bulls with a yoke and to sow the field of death. The dragon who kept watch over the Golden Fleece, sleeplessly guarding it with his sinuous coils, I killed, and I raised aloft for you the fair light of escape from death.²⁷⁵

In her attempts to aid Jason in his quests, Medea had certainly harmed her own estate (*ousiā*) by “quarrelling” (*ibid*) with her relatives:

²⁷¹ Phaedrus is characterized by his strong attachment to mythology. In the *Phaedrus*, he asks Socrates about the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia and ridicules the myth of the Egyptian gods which Socrates relates to him. In the *Symposium*, Phaedrus—far more than anyone else—draws from the poets and the mythographers in his speech.

²⁷² For an authoritative account of Euripides’ works, see Donald J. Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides: Dramatic Technique and Social Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁷³ Aside from Euripides’ version of the Medea story, three fragments of Neophron’s tragedy of the same name is recorded in the *Souda*. Unlike these dramatic works, the epic by Apollonius Rhodius and Pindar’s *Fourth Pythian Ode* do not feature a (murderous) Corinthian episode. It is possible that Plato’s Lysias draws from some lost account (in either prose or verse) of the story that also represents Medea as the mad lover of an “unerotic” beloved.

²⁷⁴ Euripides, *Medea* 16.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 476-482.

O father, O my native city, from you I departed in shame, having killed my brother.²⁷⁶

And just like the mad lovers that Lysias describes in his speech, Medea had been willing to make herself hated by others “by both word and deed” (231c) to please her beloved:

Of my own accord I abandoned my father and my home and came with you to Iolcus under Pelion, showing more love than sense. I murdered Pelias by the most horrible of deaths—at the hand of his own daughters—and I destroyed his whole house.²⁷⁷

Instead of some explicit definition of what *erōs* is, therefore, Plato’s Lysias tacitly reanimates the deeds of this iconic lover to conjure up an image of what lovers are like. And by reanimating the image of the lovers in this way, Lysias tacitly delimits his account of *erōs*—without the use of an explicit definition of what *erōs* is—to such a wretched affair and the effects that *erōs* has on lovers of this kind. Having conjured up the image of the lover whose desire has ceased, the subsequent descriptions of the lovers in Lysias’ speech—how they would behave *during* the love affair—simply lists the deeds of such lovers according to the probable or the commonly believed. Since *erōs* is such a powerful disease, Lysias’ says, how can those who were subdued by it, “when they have come to their senses, think those acts were good which they determined upon when in such a condition” (231d). Surely “they are pained by many things and they think everything that happens is done for the sake of hurting them” (232c). If you befriend a lover of this kind, then it is likely that “you will have to quarrel with them” when you “consider your own interest and are more sensible than they” (232d).

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 166-167.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 483-487.

Indeed, the non-lovers whom Lysias praises in his speech tacitly mirror the “unerotic” Jason of Euripides’ *Medea*. Unlike the Medea story, however, Lysias’ speech does not showcase the preceding love affair between the lover and the non-lover. The non-lover who tempts the beauty in (and through) Lysias’ speech simply describes and compares the two as if they were not so entangled. To refute Medea’s demand for reciprocity on account of her sufferings and toils for his sake,²⁷⁸ Jason articulates his calculating designs:

As for your reproaches to me against my royal marriage, here I shall show, first, that I am wise, second, self-controlled, and third a great friend to you and my children...It was not—the point that seems to irk you—that I was weary of your bed and smitten with desire for a new bride...my purpose was that we should live well—which is the main thing—and not be in want, knowing that everyone goes out of his way to avoid a penniless friend. I wanted to raise the children in a manner befitting my house, to beget brothers to the children born from you, and put them on the same footing with them, so that by drawing the family into one I might prosper.²⁷⁹

Like Euripides’ Jason, the non-lovers in Lysias’ speech are also characterized by their self-centered schemes: “They do kindnesses to the best of their ability, not under compulsion, but of their free will, according to their view of their own best interest” (231a). Indeed, both Euripides’ Jason and Lysias’ non-lovers understand their self-centered pursuits in terms of their self-control—that is, their ability to be unaffected by erotic passion. For these self-controlled non-lovers, *erōs* must be avoided because it could undermine the pursuit of one’s own interests. Unlike the lovers who are compelled to serve or “benefit” their beloveds even if their actions would seem mad to the unaffected bystander—a mode of behaviour that is apparently sanctioned by some

²⁷⁸ See Mastrorarde, *The Art of Euripides*, 226-227.

²⁷⁹ Euripides, *Medea* 555-565.

Athenian customs²⁸⁰—the restrained non-lovers “are likely to choose what is really best, rather than to court the opinion of mankind” (232a). Unlike Medea who quarrels with Jason because of some “small” matter,²⁸¹ moreover, the restrained non-lovers whom Lysias praises will not take up “violent enmity because of small matters, but slowly gathering little anger when the transgressions are great, forgiving involuntary wrongs and trying to prevent intentional ones” (233c).

By praising the non-lovers in this way, Lysias tacitly sides with the “unerotic” Jason of the Medea story who also praises himself as a self-controlled man. Like Jason’s replies to his deranged “ex-wife,” Lysias’ censure of the lovers (and *erōs*) is a praise of the unerotic way of life and the benefits that the non-lovers obtain in their pursuits by not being affected by *erōs*. For such non-lovers, therefore, the pursuit of one’s own “well-being” is characterized by the lack or absence of *erōs*. As such, Lysias’ speech signals and validates the “restroom stall wisdoms” that Phaedrus appreciates: “Don’t fall in love” and “Look after number one.” Since he is not affected by *erōs* or the urge to serve a beloved, the non-lover is free to pursue his own interests without the toils and harms that *erōs* brings upon the lover. And by befriending such a non-lover, the tempted beauty avoids the troublesome quarrels that one is bound to have with one’s lovers due to their disease-like passion. Lysias, of course, does not elaborate on the interests of the non-lovers and what the non-lovers will do to secure those interests. While the most obvious suggestion of Lysias’ speech is that one should befriend a non-lover like himself because

²⁸⁰ Cf. *Symposium* 183a-b.

²⁸¹ Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 565-573: “For your part, what need have you of any more children? For me, it is advantageous to use future children to benefit those already born. Was this a bad plan? Not even you would say so if you were not galled by the matter of sex. But you women are so far gone in folly that if all is well in bed you think you have everything, while if some misfortune in that domain occurs, you regard as hateful your best and truest interests.” Of course, Medea’s account of the matter is quite different. See also 586-626.

he would not behave as a deranged lover would, his concealed or clever teaching for Phaedrus, who has many lovers,²⁸² is to *become* a non-lover who receives benefits from his lovers without the urge to serve or reciprocate. Because of the attack on sophists in Athens at the time,²⁸³ Lysias is compelled to conceal his true teachings about *erōs* and *logos* in his writings.²⁸⁴

By reminding Phaedrus of the harmful effects of *erōs* and the merits of the non-lovers in this concealed and ornate manner, Lysias successfully demonstrates to Phaedrus his wisdom about *erōs* and *logos*. Phaedrus is clearly charmed by Lysias' speech; he had heard and read it many times prior to the fated meeting with Socrates. Unlike Jason who fails to persuade Medea about the sensibleness of his actions, Lysias successfully charms Phaedrus to emulate his ways. Since Phaedrus praises Lysias' speech as one that has "omitted none of the points that belong to the subject, so that nobody could ever speak about it more exhaustively or worthily than he has done" (235b), and does not reflect on Lysias' ability to persuade or deceive about *erōs* when he was prodded by Socrates' questions,²⁸⁵ it is likely that Phaedrus does not recognize the implicit connections between Lysias' speech and the "love story" that he knows. The images of the mad lover and the clever non-lover are engrained in Phaedrus' mind and he is easily captured by Lysias' speech which reanimates these images in him, but he is unable to identify the source of these images or account for them in relation to memory. Like Socrates who

²⁸² See *Phaedrus* 237b.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 257d.

²⁸⁴ There are numerous insertions about the benefits of concealing one's erotic relations in Lysias' speech. For a detailed discussion of Lysias' concealment of his teachings, see Eva Buccioni "Keeping It Secret: Reconsidering Lysias' Speech in Plato's 'Phaedrus,'" *Phoenix* 61. no. 1/2 (2007): 15-38. See also *Protagoras* 316c-317c.

²⁸⁵ See *Phaedrus* 263a-264e.

does not remember the precise source of inspiration for his first speech,²⁸⁶ Phaedrus also fails to identify the poetic source of Lysias' censure of *erōs*. But unlike Socrates who explicitly identifies his first speech with the poetic speeches that he had heard in previous times, Phaedrus fails to recognize the poetic basis of the power of Lysias' speech on his soul.

Certainly, one does not have to relate Lysias' speech to the Medea story to identify the teaching about *erōs* that it contains. As Hermann Sinaiko observes, "Lysias apparently assumes that the lover, the non-lover, and the beloved are all completely selfish and strongly motivated by a desire for physical pleasure."²⁸⁷ By identifying Lysias' use of this famous "love story" that Phaedrus knows, however, one arrives at a clearer understanding of the power of Lysias' speech on Phaedrus' soul. In other words, the identification of the intertextual parallels between Lysias' speech and Euripides' portrayal of the Medea story allows one to understand why Phaedrus is easily persuaded by speeches of this kind.²⁸⁸

In addition to appealing to Phaedrus' preference for the painless gratification of the senses,²⁸⁹ Lysias' praise of the non-lovers charms Phaedrus because it verifies Phaedrus' belief that the artful speechwriter is able to employ clever speeches to defend unorthodox positions "in law-suits, and...in public assemblies" (261b). In a way that resembles Euripides' Jason (or some other eloquent hero²⁹⁰), Lysias' speech demonstrates to Phaedrus his ability to dispute the customs or established practices that stand in the

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 235b-c.

²⁸⁷ Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, 26.

²⁸⁸ See *Phaedrus* 271c-272b.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 227a, 258e, 276e.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 261b-c; *Symposium*, 221c-d.

way of his interests. Since no one could refute the fact that we all wish to prosper, no one could in truth condemn the fruits of the non-lover's parsimonious actions. Isn't it always better to be benefited by another's toils than to toil or be harmed for another's sake?²⁹¹ Would not everyone wish to marry into some royal household and prosper? Put differently, it is by defending the unorthodox position about the merits of the non-lover with such "irrefutable" arguments that Lysias displays to Phaedrus his abilities as a competent speechwriter whom Phaedrus should befriend and emulate.

Through the display of Lysias' persuasion of Phaedrus about *erōs*, therefore, Plato represents Lysias as a speechwriter who can charm his patrons by making use of their established opinions or preferences about both the "art" of speech and what the "artful" speech is about. Plato's Lysias is someone who has mastered the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus knows.²⁹² Contrary to Socrates' explicit "criticisms" of Lysias' speech,²⁹³ the speech by Lysias is composed in a way that successfully persuades Phaedrus about Lysias' abilities as "the cleverest writer of our day" (228a). Yet by juxtaposing Lysias' persuasion of Phaedrus with Jason's attempt to appease Medea, Plato tacitly reveals the shared "destiny" of these non-lovers. Like Jason who involuntarily "castrates" himself through his royal marriage,²⁹⁴ Lysias' praise of the non-lovers is helplessly likened to the epitaph of a greedy man.²⁹⁵ Rather than its apparent lack of organization, it is the "infertility" of Lysias' greedy speech that resembles Midas' epitaph.²⁹⁶ Like Midas' epitaph which can only declare the name of the greedy man

²⁹¹ Cf. *Republic* 345e-347e.

²⁹² See *Phaedrus*, 260a, 273a.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 234e-235d, 264a-b.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 1251-1291.

²⁹⁵ See *Phaedrus* 264d.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 276b, 278d-e. See also, Hesiod, *Works and Days* 353-356.

buried underneath, Lysias' praise of the non-lover—despite its ability to charm Phaedrus—is unable to inspire the emulation of the “true lovers” (253c).

Because the non-lovers are convinced that *erōs* is a harmful thing that must be avoided, it is necessary that they will be foreign to all human pursuits that are driven by erotic passion, including the exceedingly erotic (and toilsome) pursuit of wisdom that Socrates calls philosophy. Since the knowledge or wisdom about *erōs* that Lysias already possesses and disseminates is unreflective,²⁹⁷ those who share Lysias' beliefs about *erōs* will not pursue knowledge of the truth about *erōs* (or anything else) in an impassioned or erotic manner. The non-lover who is resolute about the superiority of restraint of every kind to *erōs* of every kind is necessarily entrenched in some established opinions about both restraint and *erōs*. Unlike the gods who are always beholding the truths,²⁹⁸ human beings can only ever pursue or recollect the truths with the aid of *erōs*—a passion of the soul that originates in the perception of lack, loss, or ignorance.²⁹⁹ The philosopher's erotic pursuit of self-knowledge is rooted in his recognition of his own ignorance about his own nature.³⁰⁰ As such, the “divinity” of the rhetorician or lawgiver who “think himself equal to the gods” (258c) on the basis of the reputation that he receives from human beings is remarkably different from the “godlikeness” of the dialectician (266b), who is godlike only to the extent that he knows³⁰¹ about the various powers and affects of the human soul in relation to speech. Instead of the impassioned or erotic journey of dialectic that one takes because of one's desire to truly benefit oneself and one's

²⁹⁷ Griswold, *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, 51, 65.

²⁹⁸ See Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, 66.

²⁹⁹ See *Phaedrus* 229e, 249d, 251d-e; *Symposium* 201c, 204a.

³⁰⁰ Griswold, *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, 42-44, 98.

³⁰¹ The reliability or certainty of that knowledge, of course, is debatable. Cf. *Symposium* 175e.

beloveds, the non-lovers whom Lysias praises—like Euripides’ Jason—are necessarily condemned to a fruitless journey “upon the earth for nine thousand years and a fool below the earth at last” (256e-257a).

III. Socrates’ censure of erōs

In the discussion of speech, Socrates speaks of both of his speeches about *erōs* as if they were the two complementary parts of a single whole (265c-d). When he had felt the urge to compose the palinode, however, he compares his first speech to Lysias’ speech (242d-243d). Like Lysias’ speech, Socrates’ first speech also censures *erōs* as a harmful thing. Apart from this similarity which Socrates explicitly highlights, there are significant differences between the two censures of *erōs* that were left unmentioned. Socrates’ censure of his first speech, in other words, conceals much of what it accomplishes or shows. Why does Socrates compose this censure of *erōs* which he later recants? And what does Plato accomplish by displaying the philosopher’s censure of *erōs*? To identify the various things that the philosophers accomplish through this speech, one is compelled to compare it to both Lysias’ speech and the palinode that follows. Unlike Lysias’ speech which begins in the end of some love affair, Socrates’ censure of *erōs* begins—after a brief prologue—in a speculative inquiry about the definition of *erōs*. After the definition of *erōs* is “discovered,” Socrates depicts the various harms that the lovers bring upon their beloveds and the natural end of love affairs of this kind. There, at the two-fold end of both Socrates’ speech and the kind of love affair that it depicts, it is not the lovers but the beloveds who lament their past toils and the harms that they have suffered.

In the light of the image that Socrates offers in the “prologue” of this speech, Socrates’ speech can be understood as a transfiguration of Lysias’ speech. Through this speech, the veiled Socrates “shamefully” exposes Lysias’ persuasion of Phaedrus about *erōs* as the deception of an “unerotic” speechwriter who is in truth affected by *erōs* of a certain kind. If the definition of *erōs* that Socrates “discovers” in his speech accurately describes the condition of the deceptive lover whom he features in the prologue of the same speech, then the pursuits of such a deceiver are in truth motivated by an excessive desire³⁰² for the pleasures that are derived from the beauty of the body.³⁰³ The restraint that Lysias’ “non-lovers” force upon themselves, in other words, is rooted in a kind of madness or excess that is thoroughly unrestrained. As such, Socrates’ censure of *erōs* exposes the “non-lovers” whom Lysias praises as deceptive lovers³⁰⁴ who are in truth overpowered by the forces of vanity and lust. It is these forces or affections of the soul that compel the “non-lovers” to practice the approachable kind of rhetoric. Moreover, Socrates’ expository speech also defends the lovers in Lysias’ speech by identifying them as the beguiled beloveds who had toiled for their deceptive “non-lovers” in vain. In contrast to his enthusiasm about Lysias’ speech, however, Phaedrus is not satisfied with Socrates’ speech at all. Since he is unable to recognize or sympathize with Socrates’ depictions of the beloveds’ toils and sufferings, all that Phaedrus wishes to hear at the end of Socrates’ speech are the merits of the non-lovers which Socrates had failed to praise. Socrates’ censure of *erōs* fails to charm Phaedrus because it does not contain the things that Phaedrus prefers to hear.

³⁰² See *Phaedrus* 238a. Excess is a translation of *hūbris*.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 238c.

³⁰⁴ Griswold, *Self-knowledge in Plato’s Phaedrus*, 66.

A. The aims of Socrates' censure of *erōs*

When Phaedrus had finished reading Lysias' speech, he asks Socrates if the speech was "not wonderful, especially in diction" (234c-d), imitating Lysias' "not A, but B" technique³⁰⁵ with difficulty. In response to Phaedrus' question, Socrates speaks of the influence of Phaedrus' enthusiasm on himself, that "thinking that you know more than I about such matters, I followed in your train and joined you in the divine frenzy" (234d). Socrates is compelled to compose his first speech in response to Phaedrus' following question: "in the name of Zeus, the god of friendship, tell me truly, do you think any other of the Greeks could speak better or more copiously than this on the same subject?" (234e). According to his response to Phaedrus' question, Socrates seems to think that Lysias' speech is insufficient in two ways. In addition to Lysias' failure to speak what he ought about *erōs*, the "rhetorical manner" of the speech, Socrates says, is also inadequate (235a). In other words, Socrates the inexperienced speechwriter fails to recognize the technique of Lysias' speech; he does not immediately identify Lysias' exploitation of Phaedrus' attachment to the myths and the things that Phaedrus knows and prefers in relation to *erōs* and *logos*. It is only after the brief exchange with Phaedrus after his own censure of *erōs* that Socrates identifies the parsimonious qualities of these speeches and the "error" that has been committed against "Love."³⁰⁶ Only then does Socrates censure these speeches about *erōs* as the sort of thing that only "people brought up among low sailors" (243c) would say.

Instead of commenting on the persuasiveness of Lysias' speech in relation to the qualities of Phaedrus' soul, Socrates says that Lysias seems to have "said the same thing

³⁰⁵ See Dimock, "Alla in Lysias," 381-396.

³⁰⁶ See *Phaedrus* 242d-e.

two or three times, as if he did not find it easy to say many things about one subject” (235e). Here, Phaedrus complains because to him the “especial merit of the discourse” (235b) was its exhaustive treatment of the subject of *erōs*. Phaedrus, in other words, is convinced that the phenomenon of *erōs* is completely captured by Lysias’ speech, which has “omitted none of the points that belong to the subject” (ibid). To Phaedrus, Lysias’ speech contains everything that one needs to know about *erōs*. Instead of gratifying Phaedrus by agreeing with him, however, Socrates relates the speeches of the “wise men and women of old...the lovely Sappho or the wise Anacreon, or perhaps...some prose writers” (235c). Since Socrates knows that he has never conceived such speeches, the speech that he wishes to produce in response to Phaedrus’ praise of Lysias’ speech is necessarily based on the other speeches about *erōs* that he has heard. In the shadow of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, Socrates is compelled to demonstrate to Phaedrus—who has just invoked Zeus the god of friendship—the falsehood of his convictions about the merits of Lysias’ speech. Socrates must show that it is possible to speak about *erōs* in a way that is “different...and quite as good” (235c).

In response to Socrates’ remarks, Phaedrus says that he does not care “how or from whom” Socrates had heard the speech that he wishes to speak, but “only do as you say; promise to make another speech better than that in the book and no shorter and quite different” (235d). If Socrates is able to do as he says, then Phaedrus will dedicate a gold statue at Delphi, “as large as life, not only of myself, but of you also” (235d). If Socrates can defeat Lysias in this supposed speech contest, then Phaedrus will commemorate their victory in an exceedingly extravagant manner, like the nine archons did during and after

the Persian Wars.³⁰⁷ Since Socrates cannot compose a speech about anything that is completely different from any other speech about the same thing, however, he could not in truth compose a speech about *erōs* that contains nothing that Lysias has said.

According to Socrates' elaboration on this point, anyone who is to argue that "the non-lover ought to be more favoured than the lover" must "praise of the non-lover's calm sense and blame of the lover's unreason, which are inevitable arguments" (235e-236a). Having heard Socrates' complaints, however, Phaedrus does not suggest to Socrates that he could speak about *erōs* in a way that is different from how Lysias spoke. Instead, Phaedrus both restricts what Socrates can say and lessens the reward for the speech. In place of a pair of golden statues at Delphi for a very different speech that is of equal length, Phaedrus now promises to dedicate a statue of Socrates "of beaten metal" at Olympia if Socrates begins "with the premise that the lover is more distraught than the non-lover...and speak on the remaining points more copiously and better than Lysias" (236b).³⁰⁸ Instead of allowing Socrates to praise *erōs* and the lovers in his speech and thus avoid the statements that Lysias had already made in the censure of *erōs*, Phaedrus rigs the speech contest by "allowing" Socrates to also compose a censure of *erōs* that highlights the "remaining points" (236b). Since he decreases the reward for Socrates'

³⁰⁷ Some interpret Phaedrus' promise to dedicate the golden portrait statues at Delphi as a reference to the archons' oath for obeying Solon's laws. They promise to dedicate a statue at Delphi whenever they break one of the laws, cf. Aristotle, *The Constitution of Athens* 7.1. I fail to see how Phaedrus' promise to make such a dedication can be related to the archons' practice. On the other hand, the Athenians did make such offerings at Delphi with the spoils of war during and after the Persian Wars, when the archons' powers were diminished. See Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 10.11.5, Plutarch, *Nicias*, 13.3.

³⁰⁸ Some scholars have identified Phaedrus' promised rewards with Gorgias' dedication at Delphi and Cypselus' dedications at Olympia. See Kathryn A. Morgan, "Socrates and Gorgias at Delphi and Olympia: Phaedrus 235d6-236b4," *The Classical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1994): 375-386; Rowe, *Phaedrus*, 152; G.J. De Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1969), 78. In the light of Socrates' ironic comments, I take the second reward to be of smaller value than the first. If the second reward is in truth more valuable than the first, then Phaedrus' regulation of Socrates' speech would be more justifiable. At any rate, Phaedrus does not ease Socrates' burden by allowing him to praise *erōs* instead.

“similar” speech, Phaedrus does not seem to reflect on the meaning of Socrates’ claim that both discovery and arrangement deserve praise “in the case of arguments which are not inevitable and are hard to discover” (236a).

Rather than complaining about the lessening of the prize or the added restriction on his speech, Socrates pokes fun at Phaedrus’ attempt to defend Lysias in this way. As Phaedrus notes, a comic role-reversal between the interlocutors now takes place. Like Phaedrus who pretended to be reluctant to rehearse Lysias’ speech, Socrates now speaks of his lack of motivation for competing against a “master of his art”³⁰⁹ as a mere amateur (236d). However, unlike Phaedrus who in truth wished to rehearse Lysias’ speech even if no one was listening, Socrates seems to be seriously concerned about his inability to compete with Lysias’ speech. Instead of participating in some speech contest, Socrates only wishes to speak the truth to one’s friend in the name of Zeus, the god of friendship—even if the friend would not welcome the truth he is to speak. Indeed, Socrates is indifferent to both the honours that Phaedrus promises the victor and Phaedrus’ threat of violence. To compel Socrates to enter the speech contest, Phaedrus had to make use of an oath: “Unless you produce the discourse in the very presence of this plane tree, I will never read you another or tell you another” (236e).³¹⁰ Comically and ironically, therefore, the lover of speech contests forces the lover of speeches to speak about *erōs* as if all

³⁰⁹ The literal translation of “ἀγαθὸν ποιητὴν” is the good or skilled maker. Cf. *Phaedrus* 258b, *Symposium* 215c, 215e. Socrates refers to the poets in the discussion of the speechwriters, whereas Alcibiades refers to the rhetoricians when he is addressing the poets (including Agathon). The poet is but one of many kinds of makers, and there are many kinds of man-made speeches that are distinct from the creations of the poets.

³¹⁰ See Kenneth Dorter, “Imagery and Philosophy in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (1971): 282: “The plane tree was identified with Dionysus, and it is to it that his epithets Dendrites and Endendros refer.” Cf. Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato*, 39–41: “the description of the spot stands allegorically for the Academy; the plane tree for Plato; the agnus castus bush for the chastity of Platonic and Socratic love; the fountain for the overflowing of the wisdom to be shared; and the rest of the embellishments stand for the oratorical and poetic flowers with which Plato’s Academy abounds.”

lovers were more diseased than all non-lovers. To not have to give up the pleasure of speeches or be hindered in the pursuit of what he loves is therefore the explicit aim of Socrates' ironic censure of *erōs*. The dramatic situation compels the audience to compare the two censures of *erōs* as if they are competing for Phaedrus' praise.³¹¹ At the same time, this is not the only aim of Socrates, who is burdened with the need to speak the truth³¹² about Lysias' speech through another speech that is "different from this and quite as good" (235c). Socrates does not veil his face because he is disgracefully³¹³ outmatched by Lysias.

B. The organization of Socrates' speech

Unlike Lysias, Socrates does not begin his speech with a reminder about the speaker's business or what the audience might have heard in previous times. Instead, it begins in a brief prologue that contains an invocation of the Muses³¹⁴ followed by an external frame that contextualizes Socrates' speech. After invoking the Muses for their aid, Socrates frames his speech about *erōs* within a tale: "Once upon a time," Socrates says, there was a stripling "of great beauty" who had many lovers (237b). It is not Socrates but one of the boy's lovers who composes the speech that follows. Instead of the typical maneuvers that the lovers use, this wily lover had made the beloved believe that he was not in love. Having wooed the beloved of his dispassionate condition, this "unerotic" lover "tried to persuade him of this very thing, that favours ought to be granted rather to the non-lover than to the lover" (ibid). With this prologue, Socrates informs

³¹¹ Indeed, Phaedrus does not praise Socrates' speech until he has heard the palinode (265a-c). Phaedrus does not recognize the merits of Socrates' first speech or what it accomplishes.

³¹² Cf. *Phaedrus* 234e.

³¹³ Ibid., 237a. Socrates feels shame because his speech exposes Phaedrus' gullibility.

³¹⁴ See Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 203. Nussbaum insightfully identifies Socrates' invocation of the "Ligurian" muses with the "rationalism" to which Phaedrus is attracted.

Phaedrus about the deception of this “non-lover” whose speech is displayed within his speech.

Undoubtedly, this frame or image in the prologue offers the most important piece of information about Socrates’ censure of *erōs*. However, it is immediately concealed by another image that is layered on top; the deceptive speech that the “non-lover” makes contains no references to the prologue or the expository image that it contains. Instead of a backward “swim,” therefore, the structure of Socrates’ speech resembles the iconic acts of deception in the Greek myths. Like the deceits of a Prometheus,³¹⁵ Socrates’ censure of *erōs* is wrapped in layers of imagery which deliberately obscures the meaning of the speech as a whole.

On top of the image in the prologue, the “non-lover” begins his censure of *erōs* with an attempt to persuade about the need for definitions. According to this “non-lover,” because people are often ignorant of their ignorance about the nature of the thing of which they are receiving advice, it is necessary for the advising and the advised to come to some agreement about the deliberated thing prior to the deliberation.³¹⁶ To avoid the probable outcome of deliberations that do not proceed according to such an agreed upon definition, where “they agree neither with themselves nor with each other” at the end of the deliberation (237c), the “non-lover” and the beauty whom he tempts should come to an agreement “on a definition of love, its nature and its power, and then, keeping this definition in view and making constant reference to it...enquire whether love brings advantage or harm” (237c-d). In order to come to an agreement at the end of the

³¹⁵ Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 535-569. Some scholars identify Isocrates as the dissembling lover who censures *erōs*, see Malcolm Brown and James Coulter, “The Middle Speech of Plato’s Phaedrus,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9, no. 4 (1971): 405-423.

³¹⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1368a.

deliberation about the advantages or the harms of *erōs*, those who participate in the deliberation about *erōs* are to make use of a definition of *erōs* that they can agree to. Instead of an attempt to lead the beauty whom he tempts to recognize his ignorance about *erōs* or pursue knowledge of the truth about *erōs*, in other words, this “non-lover” will structure his deliberative speech by using a definition of *erōs* to which the beauty would agree. Since Phaedrus has allowed Socrates to “begin with the premise that the lover is more distraught than the non-lover” (236b), the definition of *erōs* that the speaker seeks must conform to Phaedrus’ stipulation to avoid the probable disagreements that might take place.

Prior to the search for a suitable definition of *erōs*, however, the speaker interjects with a problem that must be resolved. While “everyone sees that love is a desire,” he says, “we know too that non-lovers also desire the beautiful” (237d). Since the non-lovers are not totally unaffected by desires, the definition of *erōs* that the speaker seeks, it seems, must allow for the differentiation between the lovers and the non-lovers who all desire the beautiful. Of course, this characterization of the “non-lovers” is consistent with what Socrates had shown about the “unerotic” speaker in the prologue of his speech. Due to the “leap” that Socrates has taken from the image in the prologue to the deceptive speech of the “non-lover,” however, it is difficult to identify the relationship between the “non-lover” in the prologue and the non-lovers whom this “non-lover” now describes. While Socrates tells us in the prologue that this “non-lover” loves the beauty whom he deceives and tempts, this “non-lover” does not clearly define or identify the beautiful that is desired by the non-lovers of his speech.³¹⁷ At the same time,

³¹⁷ See David L. Roochnik, “The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (1987): 119: “nothing stated so far requires any ontological commitment.”

one is forced to consider the parallels between the lovers whom this “non-lover” describes and this “non-lover” whom Socrates identifies in the prologue as a lover.³¹⁸ Isn’t it terribly ironic for this “non-lover” to offer a serious censure of *erōs* if he is in truth a lover of the beauty whom he tempts? Does this “non-lover” know about Socrates’ exposition of his attempt to deceive?

Indeed, this “non-lover” does not provide a straightforward solution to the problem that he raises. In fact, the distinction between the lovers and the non-lovers is never explicitly pursued again in this speech. When Phaedrus complains about the abrupt termination of the speech which had only listed the harmful things that the lovers do to their beloveds, Socrates simply says that the non-lovers “possess all the advantages that are opposed to the disadvantages we found in the lover” (241e). If one wishes to evaluate the non-lovers according to the things that are said in the speech of the “non-lover,” then one must go out of one’s way and consider the ways of life that are devoid of the kind of *erōs* that it describes. Neither Socrates nor the “non-lover” who speaks ventures in this direction. And insofar as Socrates deliberately identifies the “non-lover” who is making the speech as a lover of the beauty whom he tempts, one is compelled to identify him with the lovers that he describes in his speech. If the “non-lover” who speaks in Socrates’ speech is ignorant of Socrates’ exposition of his deception in the prologue, then one can safely assume that this “non-lover” is made to criticize himself in Socrates’ speech.

³¹⁸ The other possibility is that the “non-lover” of Socrates’ speech identifies himself with the non-lovers in his speech who desire a kind of beauty which is different from the beauty that the lovers (of his speech) desire. If the “non-lover” is unaware of Socrates’ exposition of his deception in the prologue, however, it is more credible and satisfying to identify this “non-lover” with the lovers whom he censures in his speech.

When the “non-lover” who speaks in Socrates’ speech returns to the search for an agreeable definition of *erōs*, he seems to rely on some kind of “Empedoclean”³¹⁹

dynamics:

We must observe that in each one of us there are two ruling and leading principles, which we follow withersoever they lead; one is the innate desire for pleasures, the other an acquired opinion which strives for the best. These two sometimes agree within and are sometimes in strife.³²⁰

According to this formulation, all human actions are shaped by the interactions between these two principles which move us to act in various ways. Instead of showing how these principles could interact in both harmony and strife, however, this “non-lover” only speaks of the overpowering of one principle by the other. He does not speak about the possibility that the innate desire for pleasures could agree with the acquired opinions about how best to act. Does this imply that strife will always lead to harmony? Is harmony simply the domination of one of the two principles over the other?³²¹ At any rate, it is within the multiform and polynymous phenomenon of *hūbris*—the overpowering force of the innate desire for pleasures of every kind—that the “non-lover” identifies an agreeable or fitting definition of *erōs*.

Whenever the acquired opinion which “leads through reason toward the best” overpowers the “innate desire for pleasures” (238a), the rule of this reasoned opinion is called self-restraint (*sōphrosunē*). But whenever a desire irrationally (*alogōs*) “drags us toward pleasures and rules within us” (ibid), its rule is called excess (*hūbris*). Just as gluttons are named after their gluttony, lovers are named after their disease-like *erōs*,

³¹⁹ Cf. Empedocles DK 31B17.

³²⁰ *Phaedrus* 237d-e. Cf. Euripides, *Hippolytus* 373-430.

³²¹ Cf. *Symposium* 187a-b. See also, Euripides, *Hippolytus* 170-600. Euripides’ Phaedra is torn by the opposed demands of opinion and desire.

“which overcomes the rational opinion that strives toward the right, and which is led away toward the enjoyment of beauty and again is strongly forced by the desires that are kindred to itself toward personal beauty” (238c).³²² According to this tortuous definition—expressed in a dithyrambic manner by a Socrates who has been possessed by the nymphs of Dionysus—*erōs* is the overpowering force of a range of similar desires for the pleasures that are derived from bodily beauty (*sōmatōn kallos*), and the lovers are those who are overpowered by such desires above all else. Whereas *hūbris* denotes the whole range of phenomena where some innate desire for pleasure overpowers some acquired opinion about how best to act, *erōs* denotes a subset of *hūbris* where the gratification of such powerful desires relies on the beauty of human bodies. According to this definition, the lover is characteristically overwhelmed by lust and vanity.³²³

Indeed, it is this dynamic account of *erōs* that gives structure to the rest of this speech. Since a lover who is characterized by his desires is “a slave to pleasure,” he will “inevitably desire to make his beloved as pleasing to himself as possible” (238e). The tyranny of *erōs* forces the lover to tyrannize his beloved in a totalizing manner. To maximize the yield of pleasure that he can derive from his beloved, the lover’s deeds will necessarily harm the soul (238e-239c), the body (239c-d), and the property (239d-240a) of his beloved. In addition to these harms, the lover is also “extremely disagreeable to live with” (240c). Unlike flattery and many other harmful things, says the “non-lover” of Socrates’ speech, the association with a lover is unmingled with charm or “temporary pleasure” (240b). His “prayers and oaths” of “future benefits” are the only things that

³²² A more accurate translation of *sōmatōn kallos* would be “the beauty of the body.”

³²³ Since all three speeches about *erōs* in the *Phaedrus* contain references to the reputation of the lover and the beloved, sexual gratification is not the only kind of pleasure that is discussed in relation to love.

induce the beloved to endure his “wearisome companionship” (240e-241a). Finally, when the lover’s desire ceases, “he has a new ruler and governor within him, sense and reason in place of love and madness” (241a). At the end of the love affair, the lover becomes a non-lover who defaults on the promises that he had made, “lest by doing what he formerly did he become again what he was” (241b). And the beloved, who has not been able to obtain any benefit or pleasure from his association with this lover, is “forced to run after” the former lover “in anger and with imprecations” (ibid). The speaker does not say which of the two ruling principles had led the beloved to believe the lover’s promises or chase after the former lover now that the affair is over. Here, the “non-lover” ends his speech with a summary of the points he had made about the lover’s harmful actions, followed by one line of verse that cautions the boy whom he tempts against the lover’s friendship: “Just as the wolf loves the lamb, so the lover adores his beloved” (241d).

C. Socrates’ transfiguration of Lysias’ speech

To compete in the speech contest which Phaedrus had sponsored, the veiled Socrates transfigures Lysias’ speech in two important ways. While Socrates does follow the stipulation that the lovers are more distraught than the non-lovers, he does not censure *erōs* because it is harmful to those who are themselves affected by it. Instead, it is the beloveds who are harmed by the lovers’ excess, defined as the overpowering force of one’s innate desire for pleasures that are derived from the perception of bodily beauty.³²⁴ Aside from the reprehensible names that are given to those who are ruled by excess, this speech does little to discourage its audience from becoming lovers. Nothing in this speech allows one to determine if the rule of one’s acquired opinions about how best to

³²⁴ See Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 37

act is morally superior to the rule of the innate desire for pleasures. To be sure, the lovers are said to be harmful to their beloveds and the beauty whom the “non-lover” tempts is encouraged to befriend a “non-lover” instead of a lover. But unlike Lysias, the “non-lover” who speaks in Socrates’ speech does not claim that *erōs* is harmful to the lover. At the same time, Socrates’ speech reinterprets Lysias’ “backwards” account of the love affair and exposes the deceits of the “unerotic” speechwriter. In the light of the image in the prologue which identifies this speech with the seduction of a clever lover who had successfully disguised himself as a “non-lover,” Socrates’ speech forces this “non-lover” to offer an ironic censure of *erōs* that exposes the harms that he would bring upon his beloved.³²⁵ Through this exposition, Socrates refutes Lysias’ praise of the so-called “non-lovers” for their ability of self-control. By identifying the lovers’ actions with the tyrannical rule of erotic desires, the veiled Socrates compels Lysias the “non-lover” to expose his own enslavement to *erōs*.

Likewise, Socrates’ speech reinterprets the famous “love story” that was alluded to in Lysias’ speech. Instead of identifying the sufferings that are caused by *erōs* with the harmful deeds that the lovers do to themselves, they are reidentified with the harmful deeds that a deranged lover does to his beloved. As such, Medea did not suffer simply because she was overwhelmed by *erōs*, as Jason or Lysias argues. Instead, Medea had suffered because she had been beguiled by the empty promises of a clever lover who had been enslaved by his own erotic desires. According to Socrates’ interpretation of Medea’s “divorce” case, it is not a lover who complains about her sufferings to a non-lover at the

³²⁵ The moral assessment of the lover’s harmful actions cannot be conducted relying on the dyadic account of action (or lack of action) that the “non-lover” employs. See Griswold, *Self-knowledge in Plato’s Phaedrus*, 65: “The concealed lover’s speech is...bounded on all sides by opinion, according to the speech’s own standards.”

beginning of Lysias' speech. Rather, it is a beguiled beloved who angrily chases after an oath-breaker who had failed to fulfill his promises.³²⁶

By locating the definition of *erōs* in a dyadic account of human actions,³²⁷ the veiled Socrates identifies Lysias' praise of the non-lover with a deceptive form of eroticism that is confined to a narrow plane of existence. Since the two ruling principles are characterized in relation to each other in terms of a kind of strife that ends in the annihilation of the other,³²⁸ Socrates' expository speech does not permit the "non-lovers" to elevate beyond the antithetical dynamism of strife as such. Either the desire for erotic pleasures or some opinion which prevents one from pursuing such pleasures dictates one's actions; there is nothing that allows the "patient" of these opposed forces to decide which of the two is superior. When the lover's erotic desire ceases, the opinion that comes to dictate his actions is devoid of moral agency: he does not terminate the love affair because he had recognized the wickedness of his actions.³²⁹ As such, both the lover and the non-lover are merely the passive recipients of one of the two opposed forces, and neither of them is endowed with the capacity to evaluate the opposed demands.³³⁰

While Socrates' speech exposes and criticizes Lysias' censure of *erōs* as an instance of harmful deception,³³¹ it can potentially save the "unerotic" speechwriter from the eventual descent under the earth. Despite its censure of *erōs*, Lysias' speech—according to Socrates' exposition—is not entirely unerotic. If Lysias wishes to avoid being

³²⁶ Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 465-515.

³²⁷ The theoretical part of Socrates' first speech does not differentiate between humans and gods in terms of power and affect. See Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 103-104.

³²⁸ Cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 12-44.

³²⁹ See Benardete, *Morality and Philosophy*, 123-125. Cf. *Republic* 329c-d.

³³⁰ Burger, *Philosophic Art of Writing*, 31; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 103-104; David A. White, *Rhetoric and Reality in Plato's Phaedrus* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 49-50.

³³¹ See *Phaedrus* 260a-c.

enslaved to either of the two “principles” or forces in a haphazard manner, then Lysias must recognize the difference and distance between the truth that he knows and the truth as truth. To escape the Sisyphean journey upon the earth that gets nowhere before the eventual descent, Lysias must seek out the measures that would allow him to diagnose the nature of his own appetites or opinions in a “transcendental” way; he must be willing to examine the dynamism of his own beliefs. If Lysias is able to recognize the insufficiency of what he already knows about his own nature and how best to live, then he will not eagerly flatter or sway his audience with clever speeches for the sake of pleasure or fame.³³² Instead, he would write in a way that would allow his audience to reflect on his speech in relation to the various powers and affects of speeches and souls,³³³ lest they are enraptured by some powerful but ill-fated horizon which purports to explain *all* human actions.

Indeed, Phaedrus is not satisfied with Socrates’ speech. To Phaedrus, Socrates has not spoken about the benefits that the non-lovers obtain and why the beauty being tempted should prefer the non-lover. In other words, Socrates’ speech fails to validate Phaedrus’ beliefs about the benefits of becoming an “unerotic” speechwriter who could exploit his lovers with clever words. The irony of Phaedrus’ dissatisfaction, of course, is his inability to recognize Socrates’ exposition and transfiguration of Lysias’ deception. Despite his enthusiasm about becoming a rhetorician, Phaedrus is unable to identify or expose the rhetorical device of Socrates’ speech.³³⁴ To Socrates, on the other hand, the speech which he had spoken under Phaedrus’ compulsion is “foolish, and somewhat

³³² Ibid., 258c, 266c.

³³³ Ibid., 270c-272c, 277b-278d.

³³⁴ Ibid., 267a. “And some say that he also wrote indirect censures, composing them in verse as an aid to memory; for he is a clever man.”

impious” (242d). Like Lysias speech, Socrates’ speech also censures *erōs* as a source of human suffering. However, Socrates’ claim that he had erred against Love because he sought to gain honour among men is not exactly true. In addition to the aim of gratifying Zeus by exposing the truth about Lysias’ speech, Socrates had composed the speech for the sake of the pleasure of speeches, that is, for the love of learning.

IV. Socrates’ praise of erōs

When Socrates says that he shall “cross this stream and go away” before Phaedrus places further compulsion upon him to praise the non-lover, Phaedrus asks Socrates to stay and “talk over what has been said” (242a). Phaedrus’ request for conversation (*dialegesthai*) elicits Socrates’ second speech. As Socrates says, his spirit and habitual sign had prophetically forbidden him from going away before purifying his guilt, as if he had committed some sin against the divinity. To avoid suffering any punishment “for speaking ill of Love” (243b), Socrates must recant what he had said in the preceding speech with the use of “an ancient purification, unknown to Homer, but known to Stesichorus” (243a). To prevent the loss of sight³³⁵ and the “art of love” which he claims to possess (257a), Socrates must compose another speech about *erōs* to justify the possession of these treasured things. The compulsion that Phaedrus had placed on Socrates for composing the censure of *erōs*, it seems, had led Socrates to temporarily disremember³³⁶ the things that he already knows about his own nature and the erotic art of thinking³³⁷ that allows him to examine the nature of things.

A. The organization of Socrates’ palinode

³³⁵ Ibid., 270e.

³³⁶ Cf. *Phaedrus* 249c-250c; *Symposium* 203e, 208a.

³³⁷ See Benardete, *Morality and Philosophy*, 103-104; Roochnik, “Erotics of Philosophical Discourse,” 126-128.

Unlike the previous speeches, Socrates' palinode does not portray the seduction of some beauty by a clever speaker. The unveiled Socrates, it seems, no longer plays the role of the novice who is trying to learn from some teacher of wisdom.³³⁸ Socrates will now speak about *erōs* as an expert from whom others could learn, if they are willing.³³⁹ Instead of trying to reach some agreement with those whom he seeks to advise, that is, to discover a definition of *erōs* that would allow him to argue from the premise that "the non-lover ought to be more favoured than the lover" (235e-236a), Socrates the expert of love advises "Lysias also to write as soon as he can, that other things being equal, the lover should be favoured rather than the non-lover" (243d), even before the speech has been made.

As Anne Lebeck notes in her brilliant work, "The Central Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*," the myth of the palinode is "an aggregate of images fused into an organic whole, the manner in which they are interwoven reflecting the theme and shape of the dialogue."³⁴⁰ Like the two-folded dialogue, "one side depicting the nature of real love, the other of true rhetoric," the myth of the palinode is also divided into two reinforcing depictions of the same cosmic journey of the human soul, "one metaphysical, the other physical."³⁴¹ To add to Lebeck's insightful characterization of the organization of Socrates' mythopoetic speech, I point to the Cypselids' dedication at Olympia as a source

³³⁸ The initiand is apparently veiled in the rite of the Lesser Mysteries, see Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* trans. John Raffan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 286; D'Alviella, *The Mysteries of Eleusis*, 13; and Schefer, "Initiation into the Mysteries," 194: "Socrates turns to the boy...as the original *mystēs* and summons him to listen...as the mystery priest summons his initiand, a role that is now actively adopted by Phaedrus himself."

³³⁹ Cf. *Symposium* 207c.

³⁴⁰ Anne Lebeck, "The Central Myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 13 (1972): 268.

³⁴¹ Lebeck, "The Central Myth," 268; see also 284-285.

of inspiration.³⁴² According to Pausanias' account in the *Description of Greece*, written during the 2nd century AD, the Cypselids had dedicated at Olympia a beautifully decorated chest that protected the infant Cypselus from his assailants. Like the various depictions of myths that can be found on the different sides of this famous offering,³⁴³ the various images of Socrates' palinode can also be understood as the various tableaux of a three-dimensional object that protects Socrates from divine punishment.³⁴⁴

The first "side" of Socrates' palinode depicts the various kinds of madness that are described at the beginning of this speech. Here, one sees depictions of inspired priestesses and prophetesses foretelling "many things to many persons and thereby made them fortunate afterwards" (244b).³⁴⁵ Since divine prophecy is said to be inspired by Apollo (265b), he is probably depicted as well. Next to them, some "purifications and sacred rites" are being performed to release the madness that has "visited upon certain families through some ancient guilt" (244d). Dionysus and his usual entourage are present.³⁴⁶ The Muses are seen in another space playing various instruments. Their music is said to inspire some "gentle and pure soul...to songs and other poetry, and thus by

³⁴² *Phaedrus* 236b; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.17.5-5.19.10. For an account of the possible relationships between Stesichorus and the Chest of Cypselus, see C. M. Bowra, "Stesichorus in the Peloponnese," *The Classical Quarterly* 28. no. 2 (1934): 119. For similar observations of the relationship between the images on the Chest of Cypselus and Socrates' palinode, see Morgan, "Phaedrus 235d6-236b4," 380-382.

³⁴³ According to Pausanias' account, each of the decorated side of the Chest of Cyseplus contains many mythical depictions. There are five decorated sides in total. A great number of the myths that are referred to in the *Phaedrus* can be found in this account of the dedication: Boreas' abduction of Oreithyia (5.19.1), the wedding of Medea and Jason (5.18.3), an Olympic contest at the funeral of Pelias (5.17.9), and the chariot race between the winged chariot of Pelops and the unwinged chariot of Oenomaus (5.17.7).

³⁴⁴ See Dorter, "Imagery and Philosophy," 282: "Socrates begins by concealing himself under his cloak (237a), an act which finds an echo in Phaedrus' parallel of Socrates with the Cypsilide (236b3), the chest in which Cypsilus hid from the onslaught of the Bacchiadae." While it is likely that Plato had seen the Chest in person at Olympia, it is also possible that he had read or heard an account of the Chest that resembles Pausanias' account of it in the *Description of Greece*. See also *Letter VII* 350b.

³⁴⁵ None of the famous male prophets are present in Socrates' speech. See Mary P. Nichols, "Socrates' Contest with the Poets in Plato's *Symposium*," *Political Theory*, 32. no. 2 (2004): 197-200.

³⁴⁶ See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 166. Dionysus played a major role in the Eleusinian Mysteries, see D'Alviella, *The Mysteries of Eleusis*, 25-27, 76-78.

adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations” (245a). Not far from the Muses, one sees depictions of Eros and Aphrodite, for it is they who inspire “the madness of love” (265b). Those who are affected by the various sorts of divine madness appear to be quite ecstatic. Their arms are stretched out, their heads are tilted back, and they cannot stand straight under the influence of divine possession.³⁴⁷ One of these is an old man, and he is speaking to a younger man under a plane tree, along the Ilissos.

The second tableau depicts the ascension (and descension) of divine and human souls. Here, one sees a heavenly depiction of Zeus, “driving a winged chariot” (246e) followed by “an army of gods and spirits, arrayed in eleven squadrons” (247a). The gods are about to “go to a feast and a banquet” upon “the top of the vault of heaven” (247b). There, they will take their stand “on the outer surface of the heaven,” and “behold the things outside” as heaven revolves on its own axis (247c). The realities which the gods behold outside of heaven are inscribed as letters, since they are without colour, shape, or tangible body (ibid). Beneath the gods, one sees the other winged chariots of the soul, struggling to raise the head of the charioteer “up into the outer region” (248a). Even more winged chariots are depicted beneath these, “all yearning for the upper region but unable to reach it, and are carried round beneath, tramping upon and colliding with one another” (248a-b). During this trans-heavenly ascent, which is said to be “the utmost toil and struggle” that awaits the soul (247b), many “wings are broken through the incompetence of the drivers” (248b). If these chariots of soul are unable to maintain altitude and view the realities beyond the heavens during the “feast” of the gods, they will satiate their hunger by feeding upon opinion (ibid). When the chariot of soul “through some

³⁴⁷ See E. R. Dodds, “Maenadism in the *Bacchae*,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 33. no. 3 (1940): 155-176; Euripides, *Bacchae*, 1122-1124.

mischance is filled with forgetfulness and evil and grows heavy,” it loses its wings and is forced to depart from the ascent of the gods and falls to the earth (248c). Where a wingless soul-chariot falls, a mortal is born. Depending on how much of the truth the discarnate soul had seen, the incarnated soul will grow up and lead one of the nine types of lives on earth (248d-e).

The third “side” of the palinode reminds of Hans Memlings’ famous triptych, *The Last Judgement*. Here, the incarnated souls are receiving judgement at the end of one of their lives as men. After “three successive periods of a thousand years” of a guileless life in pursuit of beauty, the philosophers are shown to be fully winged “in the three thousandth year” (249a). They are about to return to Zeus’ squadron and be readmitted to the hyperuranian feast of the gods if they are able. Beneath the depiction of the philosopher’s ascent, one sees the other incarnated souls being judged by the gods of the Underworld. If they had lived justly, they will “obtain a better lot” in the next life, and “whoever lives unjustly, a worse” (248e). In other words, the lot that one receives in the present life is shaped, but not determined, by the choices that one had made during the previous life.³⁴⁸ After judgement, “some go to the places of correction under the earth and pay their penalty, while the others, made light and raised up to a heavenly place by justice, live in a manner worthy of the life they led in human form” (249b). It is said that these souls will be reassembled to “choose their second life, each choosing whatever it wishes” for their next life, after a thousand years (ibid). Here, some of the human souls that had become beasts are reborn into men by choice, and some of the human souls choose a beastly way of life instead. If the human soul is able to “understand a general

³⁴⁸ On the Orphism of Socrates’ palinode, see Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 80-91; for Socrates’ comments on these beliefs about the soul, see *Phaedo* 114d.

conception formed by collecting into a unity by means of reason the many perceptions of the senses...a recollection of those things which our soul once beheld...lifting its vision above the things which we now say exist...into real being,” then it will be able to differentiate between a human life and the life of a beast (249b-c). When the human soul is no longer able to think in such a dialectical manner, however, it will choose the beastly life of “lust and begetting” (251a).

Beside the judgement scene, the lives of the different incarnated souls are probably shown. He who still remembers what he had seen upon the “plain of truth” (248b) is standing alone, for few “are left which retain an adequate recollection” of the “holy sights they once saw” (250a). Like the depictions of the inspired mortals in the first tableau, he is “stricken with amazement” when he sees “here any likeness of the things of that other world” (ibid).³⁴⁹ He alone “turns his attention toward the divine” (249d), away from the serious pursuits³⁵⁰ of the many. Next to the inspired philosopher, a tyrant of some kind is purging his court, while a sophist is briefing the *demos* outside. Most of them are craftsmen—but painters, poets and gymnasts can also be seen in the crowd. The “warlike ruler” and the politicians or financiers are standing outside, scheming against the tyrant. Further to the side, the philosopher is covered in sweat, shuddering at the sight of “a godlike face or form which is a good image of beauty” (251a). The “effluence”³⁵¹ of beauty—incribed as letters—are flowing from the beauty into the lover’s eyes. This effluence of beauty “moistens the germ of the feathers...and as the nourishment streams upon him, the quills of the feathers swell and being to grow from the roots over all the

³⁴⁹ See also *Phaedrus* 230b-c.

³⁵⁰ Cf. *Symposium* 206b.

³⁵¹ See Lebeck, “The Central Myth,” 274.

form of the soul; for it was once all feathered” (251b). The sight of the beautiful beloved facilitates the philosopher’s memory of the divine: “beauty, wisdom, goodness, and all such qualities” (246e). Next to this pair, the tyrant is killed in his court, either by the many or the few.

In the next montage, a winged charioteer is standing in the basket of a chariot, holding the reins to two unwinged horses.³⁵² The horse that is standing to the right is “white in colour...he is a friend of honour joined with temperance and modesty, and a follower of true glory” (253d). This horse willingly obeys the winged charioteer as “he needs no whip, but is guided only by the word of command and by reason” (253e). The other horse, however, “is crooked, heavy, ill put together, his neck is short and thick, his nose is flat, his colour dark, his eyes grey and bloodshot; he is the friend of insolence and pride” and “hardly obedient to whip and spurs” (ibid). Together with the winged charioteer, they represent the three parts of the philosopher’s incarnated soul. The charioteers of the other incarnated souls are unwinged,³⁵³ for “the mind of the philosopher only has wings, for he is always, so far as he is able, in communion through memory with those things the communion with which causes God to be divine” (249c). When the philosopher’s “soul-charioteer” beholds a “love-inspiring vision” that is caused by the sight of his beautiful beloved, the “right-handed” horse “does not leap upon the beloved” despite the soul’s “tickling and prickings of yearning” (254a). But the other horse “no longer heeds the pricks or the whip of the charioteer” and “springs wildly forward, causing all possible trouble to his mate and to the charioteer, and forcing them to approach the beloved and propose the joys of love” (ibid). As the chariot is forced to

³⁵² Cf. Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece*, 5.18.1.

³⁵³ Ibid., 5.17.7.

approach the beloved, however, the memory of the charioteer “is borne back to the true nature of beauty, and he sees it standing with modesty upon a pedestal of chastity, and when he sees this he is afraid and falls backward in reverence” (254b). As the charioteer is reminded of these true beauties and virtues—despite his inability to see them with clarity as a mortal being³⁵⁴—he “falls back like a racer from the starting-rope, pulls the bit backward even more violently than before from the teeth of the unruly horse, covers his scurrilous tongue and jaws with blood, and forces his legs and haunches to the ground, causing him much pain” (254e). After a few such incidents, the dark horse is accustomed to obeying reason and mind, and the soul of the philosophical lover can “from that time on” follow “the beloved in reverence and awe” (ibid).

Whereas the preceding montage depicts the internal psychology of the philosophical lover as he befriends his beautiful beloved, the final montage of the palinode offers an external depiction of the same process.³⁵⁵ The same deranged man is depicted again. He “feels his wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and like a bird, gazes upward and neglects the things below” (249d). When such a lover beholds a beautiful beloved whom he had chosen “from the ranks of the beautiful according to his character” (252d), he is not ruled by the desire for the bodily pleasures that are derived from beauty as such. Since he knows the difference and distance between the beauty that he sees and the true beauty that he longs to see, he will not “pursue pleasure in violation of nature” (251a). Instead, the lover will restrain the dark horse of his soul and fashion and adorn his beloved “like a statue, as though he were

³⁵⁴ See *Phaedrus* 250b.

³⁵⁵ For a helpful discussion of the structure and the texture of the myth, see Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, 49-55.

his god, to honour and worship him” (252d-e). To accomplish his aim, the philosophical lover will learn “from all who can teach” (252e) about “the just and the good and beautiful” (276c). And as he searches within himself to discover the nature of his god, he succeeds because he has been compelled by memory to keep his eyes fixed on his god (253a).³⁵⁶ The philosophical lover will seek to learn from others about the divine—the good things that he will use to adorn his beloved—but he will compare these teachings with what he already knows or remembers through self-examination; it is not the former but the latter that allows him to succeed in his task.³⁵⁷ Since the philosophical lover considers his beloved to be the cause of these divine recollections, he will “love him more than before” (ibid). The philosophical lover will draw the “waters” of his inspiration from the god whom he follows, and “like the bacchantes... pour it out upon the beloved and make him, so far as possible, like their god” (ibid).³⁵⁸ By “imitating the god themselves and by persuasion and education,” the philosopher will lead the beloved to “the conduct and nature of the god” to the greatest possible extent (253b).³⁵⁹

When the beloved is finally initiated “into the mysteries of love” (253c)—that is, when he also remembers the realities that he had once saw but no longer clearly sees—“he sees himself in his lover as in a mirror” (255d). Just as “the wind or an echo rebounds from smooth, hard surfaces and returns whence it came, so the stream of beauty passes back into the beautiful through the eyes, the natural inlet of the soul, where it reanimates the passages of the feathers, waters them and makes the feathers begin to grow, filling the soul of the loved one with love” (255c-d). The philosopher’s adornment of his beloved

³⁵⁶ Cf. *Phaedrus* 251a.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 275a.

³⁵⁸ See also *Phaedrus* 270b, 276b, 277c.

³⁵⁹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 277a.

with divine qualities, in other words, nourishes the beloved's wings of the soul, which "more than any other thing that pertains to the body it partakes of the nature of the divine" (246e). And because he is made to remember what he no longer clearly sees but naturally desires to see,³⁶⁰ the philosopher's beloved will also become a lover of his lover, though "he calls it, and believes it to be, not love, but friendship" (255e).³⁶¹ Since he is newly initiated—not as a recently incarnated soul of a philosopher but as an initiate of the philosophical lover—he "does not understand his own condition and cannot explain it; like one who has caught a disease of the eyes from another" (255d). Two chariots are depicted above the two feathered lovers, and the charioteers are trying to pull the dark horses apart. If these lovers "live a life of happiness and harmony here on earth, self controlled and orderly, holding in subjection that which causes evil in the soul and giving freedom to that which makes for virtue," they are "light and winged" when their life comes to an end, for "they have conquered one of the three truly Olympic contests" (256b).³⁶² The winged philosopher ascends as he does in the preceding depictions,³⁶³ followed by his beloved lover who is also winged.

Beneath these ascending lovers of wisdom, the lovers of honour are not fully winged. Though their love of honour had helped them to control the dark horses of the soul, they had failed to pursue or exchange the truly beneficial things like the "true lovers" (253c). They sought to benefit themselves and each other according to some code of honour,³⁶⁴ but they did not examine what they believed to be honourable as the

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 247d, 248b-c.

³⁶¹ Cf. *Symposium* 205b-d.

³⁶² Cf. Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece*, 5.17.11.

³⁶³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 248a, 249a.

³⁶⁴ Cf. *Republic* 331d, 334b.

philosophers do. These lovers of honour failed to consider the difference and distance between the truly honourable or divine things and its “earthly copies” (250b). They are not punished by the gods when they die, nor will they choose the life of the beast in a thousand year’s time, for “it is the law that those who have once begun their upward progress shall never pass again into darkness and journey under the earth” (256d). Even further below, the “non-lover” and his “beloved” are not even feathered.³⁶⁵ Since both the “non-lover” and the “beloved” whom he charms only seek to “benefit” themselves according to what “the common folk praise as virtue” (256e), their wings find no nourishment through the company that they share. Like the love affair that was described in the first two speeches, the gods and the divine virtues are completely absent from their lives. To be sure, these “non-lovers” wish to benefit themselves, but since they are constrained by the narrow conceptions of the beneficial that they had received from the many, they are blind to the beautiful things that are in front of them. They are unwilling or unable to toil after the truth with their minds because they have found a substitute.³⁶⁶ They will jeer at the depictions of the winged souls in myths and paintings as delusions—some absurd combination of man and bird—and teach others to jeer at such depictions as if they had struck gold.³⁶⁷ Here, Socrates completes his palinode with a prayer that Lysias would turn toward philosophy as his brother did, so “that his lover Phaedrus may no longer hesitate, as he does now, between two ways, but may direct his life with all singleness of purpose toward love and philosophical discourses” (257b). Thus the last

³⁶⁵ Cf. *Statesman* 266e.

³⁶⁶ See *Phaedrus* 249b, 260a.

³⁶⁷ Phaedrus was exiled from Athens from 415 to 404 on charges of impiety. See De Vries, *The Phaedrus of Plato*, 7; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 95.

image of the palinode returns to the first, where such prayers are offered to the gods by the inspired experts.

In contrast to the linear progression of the previous speeches, therefore, Socrates' palinode is characterized by its circularity. Like Lysias' speech which begins at the termination of some love affair and moves "backwardly" to the beginning of the lover's desire, Socrates' first speech also "moves" in a linear manner, only in the opposite direction. Unlike these speeches, the palinode does not describe a love affair as it takes place in a discrete space-time. Since it depicts the multipart and multiform human soul as it ascends and descends across multiple planes of existence over infinite time, the palinode's account of the philosopher's "love affair" is without a beginning or an end. When the philosopher's discarnate soul finally returns to the trans-heavenly banquet of the gods, he does not thereby cease in the struggle of love. At the same time, incarnation or fallenness merely makes it more difficult for the philosopher's soul to pursue the true objects of its desire. Though it will protect him from ruin, the sight of the hyperuranian truths does not make the philosopher into a god. The philosopher's love affair on earth as a mortal being, in other words, only resembles or continues his activities in the other "places"—in or beyond heaven. In sum, the philosopher's toilsome journey of love *never* culminates in complete satisfaction or apotheosis.

In addition to its circular shape, Socrates' palinode is also comprised of interpenetrating or overlapping parts. Indeed, the same protagonist is shown in the different "sides" or parts of the same speech, albeit in different forms or different

settings.³⁶⁸ As is the case for the interpretation of the other speeches, the understanding of the meaning of its parts is premised on an understanding of the meaning of the whole.³⁶⁹ The circularity of the philosopher's love affair as a whole, however, allows it to be told in such a non-linear fashion. In the light of Socrates' speculations of the artful writings of the philosopher,³⁷⁰ the complexity of the palinode is as "aesthetic" as it is pedagogical. Since one could not see the whole from any of the "sides" of this "three-dimensional" depiction, the audience of the palinode must commit to memory each of the "sides" that he had seen. When the whole story has been seen and remembered, the meaning of the whole illuminates the meaning of each part.³⁷¹ And only after the whole has been seen and understood can the audience be reminded of the whole by viewing each of its parts.³⁷² As such, the organization of the palinode is both more complex³⁷³ than Socrates' expository speech and more elegant than Lysias' backward "swim."

B. Socrates' praise of philosophical *erōs*

In contrast to Socrates' first speech which had listed a whole range of harmful things that the hubristic lover does to his beloved,³⁷⁴ Socrates' mythopoetic praise of *erōs* focuses on the benefits that *erōs* confers upon the philosopher's soul. Instead of something that is harmful to either the lover or the beloved, moreover, *erōs* is said to be

³⁶⁸ Sinaiko, *Love, Discourse, and Knowledge*, 50: "Every subject discussed is an aspect or subdivision of some previous topic, and thus each part of the myth is essentially an elaboration of a portion of a previous part which had not been fully developed."

³⁶⁹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 264a-c.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 277b-c, 278a-d.

³⁷¹ Participation in the Eleusinian Mysteries is said to have a similar effect, see D'Alviella, *The Mysteries of Eleusis*, 20-22. See also Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1-39.

³⁷² Sinaiko, *Love, Discourse, and Knowledge*, 50: "At every point the reader feels [though he may not consciously understand why] that the particular subject under discussion is intimately connected with what has already been said; that nothing wholly new or completely unexpected is ever introduced into the discourse; and that everything in the myth, including all the mythical details, is a necessary and indispensable element of the whole."

³⁷³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 277c.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 238e-240a.

beneficial to both the lover and his beloved.³⁷⁵ The perplexity of Socrates' praise of *erōs*, of course, is the tragic fact that the philosopher's pursuit of true wisdom or beauty never culminates in complete satisfaction. If the human soul—either winged or unwinged—is by definition incapable of complete knowledge of the truth, then why does Socrates praise the philosopher's love of wisdom as the thing that can confer the greatest blessings upon mankind? If the human pursuit of wisdom is characterized by its sheer difficulty, then why is the philosopher's love of wisdom worthy of praise?

The argument of Socrates' praise of philosophical *erōs* is premised on the distinction between the powers and the affects of human and divine souls. According to Socrates, the human soul is composed of both divine and animalistic parts which can affect and lead it in opposite directions.³⁷⁶ Like the divine soul, the human soul also contains a mind that is capable of beholding the hyperuranian truths which nourish the soul and make it happy (*eupatheī*).³⁷⁷ Yet unlike the divine soul which is composed of parts that are “all good and of good descent” (246a-b), one of the two horses in the chariot of the human soul is of “quite the opposite breed and character” (246b). This horse, Socrates says, has terrible vision and is a friend of *hūbris* and boastfulness or pride (*alazoneias* 253e). Because of its haughty or transgressive nature, it does not readily obey the voice of reason. Since very few of the incarnated souls “retain an adequate recollection” of the hyperuranian banquet of the gods and the divine things that they had seen (250a), the many, who are “not newly initiated, or has been corrupted,” will be easily controlled by the hubristic dark horse of the soul-chariot (250e). When such a soul

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 256b

³⁷⁶ See Benardete, *Morality and Philosophy*, 138: “For soul to be winged means to be capable of ascent and lofty flight; for soul to have horses in its charge means to be capable of horizontal motion.”

³⁷⁷ See *Phaedrus* 247c-d.

beholds an earthly copy of true beauty, it “does not quickly rise from this world to that other world” (250a). And since it is unable to recollect the true beauty that it had seen or differentiate between the illusory and the real, it will be unable to subdue the dark horse or the desire for pleasures that are derived from the perception of bodily beauty. Under the rule of the dark horse, most incarnated souls will be unable to remember that they have failed to remember—they are ignorant of their own forgetfulness, ignorance, and boastfulness.³⁷⁸ Instead of examining the teachings about “justice and beauty and goodness” (278a) that it receives from the wise as mortal wisdoms—that is, as teachings that are necessarily different from and inferior to divine wisdom—it will be easily persuaded by the human teachings that appeal to what it perceives to be true (and good). Indeed, such a forgetful and boastful soul will be unable to question the teaching that pleasure is divine. It will be unable to identify the life of the beast for what it is.

Since it is premised on the observation about the qualitative differences between the souls of the gods and the souls of the mortals, the philosopher’s love of wisdom saves him from falling prey to the hubristic belief that he could ever possess true wisdom as if he were a god. When the philosopher does attempt to adorn his beloved with virtues, it is also premised on the same observation that would lead them to reflect on what little they know about the virtues. The philosopher can only ever hope to remind the beloved that he too is a human being who loves but does not possess true wisdom. Unlike those who claim to be wise and employ their wisdom to please one’s “good and noble masters,”³⁷⁹ Socrates is wise only to the extent that he is capable of dialectical thinking.³⁸⁰ As the

³⁷⁸ Cf. *Symposium* 204a.

³⁷⁹ See *Phaedrus* 273d-274a.

³⁸⁰ See *Apology* 21d, *Phaedrus*, 266b-c. For a more physical interpretation of “dialectic,” see Page duBois, “The Homoerotics of the *Phaedrus*,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 17, no. ½ (1982): 9-15.

desire of the human soul for the true wisdom which it remembers it lacks, philosophical *erōs* is beneficial because it simultaneously rejects all human teachings as divine wisdom and encourages the examination of all human teachings about wisdom as potential instances of divine recollection. Philosophy, in other words, is “the highest form of the mating of courage and moderation.”³⁸¹

C. Socrates’ purification of the censure of *erōs*

As some scholars have noted, much of Socrates’ palinode reminds of the purification ritual that takes place during the Eleusinian Mysteries.³⁸² Like Dionysus Zagreus, whose life story is apparently told during the highest stages of the mysteries,³⁸³ Socrates’ censure of *erōs* is also resurrected and reassembled through some kind of divine “intervention.”³⁸⁴ By juxtaposing Socrates’ palinode with the mysteries, Plato invites his audience to participate in the “initiation into the mysteries of love” (253c). Rather than the dissemination of unambiguous doctrines which could be used to dictate the initiands’ lives,³⁸⁵ however, one cannot participate in the philosopher’s rite of passage unless one identifies Socrates’ rectification of his previous speech about *erōs*. To inspect the sacred objects that are displayed during the philosopher’s version of the mysteries, one must use one’s “memory within” (275a) and be reminded of “the matter about which they are written” (275d).³⁸⁶ To understand why Socrates’ speeches are suitable to see for those who wish to examine about speeches,³⁸⁷ in other words, one must open the “chest”

³⁸¹ Strauss, “What is Political Philosophy?” 40.

³⁸² See Schefer, “Initiation into the Mysteries,” 175-196.

³⁸³ See D’Alviella, *The Mysteries of Eleusis*, 25-27; Schefer, “Initiation into the Mysteries,” 190.

³⁸⁴ See *Phaedrus* 242b-c.

³⁸⁵ See Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 89.

³⁸⁶ See Schefer, “Initiation into the Mysteries,” 189. Aside from Sinaiko’s rigorous account, several other scholars have also commented on the dialectical relations between the three speeches; see also Black, “Plato’s View of Rhetoric,” 370; Curran, “Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” 67-8.

³⁸⁷ See *Phaedrus* 265a.

of Socrates' palinode and observe the implicit alterations in the things that Socrates has said about *erōs*.³⁸⁸

As Socrates himself says in the discussion of speech, the purification of his censure of *erōs* relies on the philosopher's art of dialectic.³⁸⁹ To purify his censure of *erōs* or the narrow definition of *erōs* that he gives in his first speech—the overwhelming force of the excessive desire for the pleasures that are derived from the perception of bodily beauty—Socrates the hierophant displays its “resurrection” by offering a more dialectical account of human nature. Indeed, *erōs* as hubristic madness can be identified with the dark horse of the soul-chariot.³⁹⁰ By using the art of dialectic to re-examine the nature of the human soul, Socrates was able to divide the phenomenon of *erōs* into two distinguishable parts. As such, he was able to identify the blameworthy kind of *erōs* not with an affect of human nature as a whole, but with an affect of one of its “locomotive” parts.

Like *erōs*, madness as the predicate of *erōs* and the lovers is also divided into two distinguishable parts and syncretized into a more dialectical account of the human condition. In contrast to the state of madness that can be observed in the man who is ruled by the dark horse of the soul, characterized by his enslavement to a whole variety of pleasures and the boastful claim that pleasure is divine, the madness that Socrates depicts

³⁸⁸ Here I depart from Sinaiko's observation that “Love is undefined only in the special sense that it is the encompassing whole within the context of which all the particulars are what they are...to understand this conception of love is not to understand one conception among many, for it is the only such conception; and to understand it, no matter at what level, is to have a comprehensive view of the whole” (101). While I also understand the account of *erōs* in terms of parts and wholes, I don't think Socrates seriously thinks that philosophical *erōs* can be identified with *erōs* of every kind—unless one relies on the claim that dialectic is a characteristically human capacity. Though such a “collection” of *erōs* makes sense, it does not allow one to highlight why the philosopher's love of wisdom is particularly worthwhile.

³⁸⁹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 265d-266b.

³⁹⁰ Burger, *Plato's Phaedrus*, 65-66.

in the palinode has an entirely different “genealogy.” Despite the vague definition that is given to it, all four parts of the kind of madness that Socrates praises in the palinode—“a divine release from the customary habits” (265a)—seem to rely on the philosopher’s ability to distinguish between the human and the divine.³⁹¹ Indeed, to *purify* his censure of Love through a *mythopoetic* speech that can *prophetically* shelter him from punishment, Socrates is captivated by the kind of madness that he praises in every way.³⁹² Philosophical *erōs* is simultaneously the highest kind of divine madness (256b) and the common denominator of madness as such. Unlike hubristic madness, divine madness is not caused by the rule of the dark horse. Rather, it is the symptom of the mind’s remembrance of the divine things which it no longer sees and possesses; it is a form of madness that leads the mad to transcend the established opinions about the divine.

Through the mythopoetic representation of the journey of the immortal soul, therefore, Socrates was able to purify his error against Love, “a god or something divine” (242e). In contrast to the kind of *erōs* that is exposed and censured in his first speech, philosophical *erōs* originates in the divine part of the human soul—the mind’s recollection of “those things which our soul once beheld, when it journeyed with God” (249c). Since his recollection about the divine reminds him of the difference and distance between the human and the divine, the philosophical lover is compelled to examine the human opinions about the just, the good and the beautiful. The philosophers’ desire to benefit their beloved motivate them to learn from others and “search eagerly within themselves to find the nature of their god” (253a), and it is this pursuit of the beloved’s well-being

³⁹¹ See also *Phaedrus* 244b, 244d, 245a.

³⁹² For a discussion of the syncretic relationships between Dionysus and Apollo, see Lazlo Versényi, “Dionysus and Tragedy,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, 16. no. 1 (1962): 82-97.

which nourishes their soul with clearer recollections of the highest things. When the philosophical lover succeeds to initiate his beloved “into the mysteries of love” (253c) through “persuasion and education” (253b), the beloved also becomes a lover of wisdom and leads a philosophical way of life. In other words, the philosopher’s beloved cannot become a philosophical lover by being a passive recipient of the philosopher’s speeches. Rather, the beloved attains moral (and intellectual) growth through his own examinations of the highest things as a “true lover” of his own beloved. In place of the tyrannical oppression of hubristic *erōs*, the philosophical lovers love or benefit themselves and their beloveds through dialectic.

V. *Plato’s display of rhetoric in the Phaedrus*

This chapter has highlighted the rhetorical action of the three speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays in the *Phaedrus*. Like the discussion of speech, the three speeches about *erōs* are also addressed to some soul. Unlike Socrates’ persuasion of Phaedrus about speech, however, the speeches about *erōs* are delivered without interruption or discussion. Though the brief exchanges that take place prior and between the three speeches underscore their dramatic situation, it is the task of the audience to make sense of the rhetorical action that takes place in the souls of the different interlocutors. Indeed, Phaedrus and Socrates have distinct interpretations (and assessments) of the various speeches and what they accomplish. While Phaedrus is dissatisfied with Socrates’ censure of *erōs* because it does not praise the non-lovers, Socrates is unimpressed with Lysias’ deceptive speech which Phaedrus admires. Moreover, Phaedrus does not seem to understand why or how Socrates purifies his first speech through the palinode. Instead of being charmed by Socrates’ mythopoetic depiction of philosophical *erōs*, Phaedrus is

impressed by Socrates' "manly" ability to compose contradictory speeches about the "same thing" (261d).

In contrast to his lukewarm responses to Socrates' speeches, Phaedrus is charmed by Lysias' imagistic speech because it reanimates the iconic representations of love that he knows and prefers. Despite the absence of a definition of *erōs*, Lysias' speech effectively highlights the benefits that the "unerotic" speechwriter enjoys in his love affairs in contradistinction to the folly of the mad lovers. Lysias' clever speech, in other words, exemplifies the approachable kind of rhetoric that Phaedrus pursues. In contrast to Lysias' censure of *erōs*, Socrates' first speech fails to validate Phaedrus' engrained beliefs about the superiority of the "unerotic" way of life. Indeed, Phaedrus seems to have failed to recognize Socrates' exposition of the "unerotic" speechwriter as a lover of the beauty whom he deceives. And to the extent that Socrates' "shameful" exposition of Lysias' deceptive eroticism fails to remind Phaedrus of the harmful effects of *erōs* as such, Socrates is compelled to recant this speech which has failed to represent the truth about *erōs* as a complex phenomenon.

In his mythopoetic speech, Socrates purifies his censure of *erōs* by integrating the hubristic kind of *erōs* into a more dialectical account of the human soul. Instead of an aspect of one of the two motivating principles of all human actions, the hubristic kind of *erōs* is identified with an affect of the unruly part—the dark horse—of the chariot of the human soul. In this mythopoetic account, hubristic *erōs* does not have to struggle against one's "acquired opinions which strives for the best" (237d-e) in a haphazard manner. Instead, it can be disciplined and governed by the mind—the part of the soul that is characterized by its ability to recollect and philosophize about the divine. Indeed, it is in

this part of the soul that one locates the philosopher's love of wisdom—a kind of *erōs* that originates in the philosopher's recognition of the difference and distance between the human and the divine. Because the philosopher can differentiate between the things that he truly desires and their earthly copies, he will necessarily question the human teachings about these things. Unlike Lysias who praises the “unerotic” speechwriter and the benefits that they could attain in their love affairs—pleasure, wealth, or glory—Socrates praises the philosopher's love of wisdom because it is the only affect of the soul that induces mankind to examine the nature of things in a way that transcends the chthonic boundaries of the established opinions. Decisively, both of Socrates' speeches about *erōs* fail to exploit Phaedrus' preferences or beliefs to allow the audience to philosophize about the moral worth of *logos* and *erōs*.

Just as Socrates speculates in the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, Plato's philosophical writing displays various kinds of speeches and souls to facilitate the serious pursuit of philosophy or dialectic. In contrast to Lysias' “unerotic” teachings about *logos* and *erōs*, Socrates has sought to persuade Phaedrus to pursue the philosopher's way of life all along—a noble attempt that ends in “failure.”³⁹³ The disjointed parts of the *Phaedrus*,³⁹⁴ in other words, are the disparate parts of the same demonstration of the praiseworthiness (or nobility³⁹⁵) of the philosopher's way of life. While Socrates' tortuous persuasion of Phaedrus about speech reveals the *power* of the philosopher's art

³⁹³ See Jessica Moss, “Soul-Leading: The Unity of the *Phaedrus*, Again,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 43 (2012): 1-23.

³⁹⁴ Many scholars have sought to highlight the underlying unity of the *Phaedrus*, which is accurately characterized as a “diptych.” For a sample of this literature and the subjects that have been discussed, see Moss, “Unity of the *Phaedrus*,” 1-2, n. 2-3. Since this dissertation is concerned with the “unity” of Plato's philosophy and the literary form of the dialogues, its formulation about the “unity” of the *Phaedrus* would resemble Moss' account which argues that philosophy is “at the heart of all the dialogues” (3).

³⁹⁵ See Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato*, 39.

of thinking or dialectic, it is in the mythopoetic palinode that he demonstrates the noetic or anamnestic *affect* of Socratic philosophy. If one examines the disparate persuasions (or parts) that Plato displays in this dialogue by relying on Socrates' disclosures about philosophy and philosophical writing, then it is possible to arrive at the holistic or unifying aim of Plato's written speech which illuminates the holistic meaning of each of its parts.

To reiterate, Socrates' depiction of the journey of the philosopher's soul as it ascends and descends across the different planes of existence through time—the philosopher's depiction of his own passions and strivings as a distinct kind (and part) of speech that is displayed in Plato's complex (and multipart) speech—reveals Plato's serious pursuit as a philosophical writer. Like Socrates' "spoken" praise of philosophical *erōs*, Plato's written speech is also guided by the same love of wisdom which goads him to benefit his beloveds to the extent that he is able as a human being.³⁹⁶ Plato's philosophical writing, in other words, exemplifies the beautiful kind of *erōs* or love affair which Socrates praises.³⁹⁷ Since all writings can only remind its audience of what they already know, to remind (or persuade) his audience of the moral worth of philosophy, Plato must write in a way that would allow them to participate in its action. To attain his end, Plato displays in this dialogue the philosopher's attempts to persuade about *erōs* and *logos* beside the speeches of the influential teachers about these things. Like the artful writer whom Socrates describes in the discussion of speech,³⁹⁸ Plato anticipates that many of the recipients of his writings would be influenced by teachings that resemble

³⁹⁶ See *Phaedrus* 271c, 274a, 277a.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 253c.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 277b-c.

Lysias' teachings about the superiority of the "unerotic" way of life of the rhetoricians. By allowing his audience to examine the speeches that he displays as his Socrates would, Plato leads his audience to reflect on the harmful effects of hubristic *erōs* and the teachings of wisdom that are sympathetic to *erōs* of this kind. To participate in the action of Plato's philosophical writing is to reflect on the various powers and affects of one's soul in relation to the various kinds of speeches or teachings that are said to contribute to human well-being. Only when the recipients of Plato's writings examine the various paths that one could take in such a journey as Socrates would that the moral worth of the philosophers' path becomes apparent to him.

Chapter 4

Praise of Erōs³⁹⁹ in the *Symposium*

Though the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* have been identified as dialogues that contain comparable expositions on the theme of *erōs*,⁴⁰⁰ it is difficult to find comparative studies of the various speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays in these dialogues.⁴⁰¹ The lack of comparative study is surprising if only because a clear understanding of Plato's philosophical writing seems to depend on a clear understanding of the philosopher's conception of *erōs*. Instead of some unambiguous treatise about the philosopher's love of wisdom, however, Plato displays two disparate speeches of Socrates, delivered in different dramatic circumstances in response to different non-Socratic speeches about *erōs* or Eros. In both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, Plato displays some speech contest where Socrates is to defend through speech the praiseworthiness of the philosopher's love of wisdom. As I have sought to demonstrate in the preceding chapters, it is possible to understand Plato's philosophical writings (or the speeches that are displayed in them) in the light of what Socrates says in the *Phaedrus* as literary works that disseminate an art of thinking that Socrates calls dialectic. Hence the distinct speech that Socrates produces in the *Symposium*—Socrates' recollections of Diotima's elaborate and diverse teachings about the art of *erōs*⁴⁰²—poses a real difficulty. Does Socrates

³⁹⁹ In his influential essay, Bloom uses Eros "so as always to leave open the possibility of its divinity." See Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 432. In this chapter, I will use Eros until it becomes apparent that the speaker is no longer speaking about a god or a divine being. Whenever both Eros and *erōs* are referred to, the latter is used. In Socrates' recounted speech, Diotima identifies Eros the daemon with the philosophical kind of *erōs*. See *Symposium*, 202e-203a.

⁴⁰⁰ Rosen, "The Role of Eros," 455; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 246-248.

⁴⁰¹ For an exceptional study of Socrates' distinct speeches about *erōs* in these dialogues, see G.M.A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1935): 87-119.

⁴⁰² Numerous scholars have highlighted the diversity (and ambiguity) of Diotima's account of *erōs*. Instead of praising *erōs* as a simple or uniform thing, Socrates' Diotima depicts a variety of erotic desires and pursuits that can be collectively understood as the pursuit of happiness or well-being. See Daniel E. Anderson, *The Masks of Dionysos: A Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (Albany: State University of

contradict himself about the nature of *erōs* as an affection of the human soul, or is there some way to make sense of the apparent differences between his speeches? Moreover, does Plato disseminate the same art of thinking by displaying Socrates' elaborate speech in juxtaposition to the speeches of Agathon's distinguished guests?

Unlike the *Phaedrus*, the discussion of speech in the *Symposium* is not clearly displayed. Aristodemus fell asleep and missed much of the conversation about speech that took place between Socrates and the poets. Though scholars have produced insightful interpretations of this dialogue in the light of what little Aristodemus remembered of that conversation,⁴⁰³ it is unclear if the philosopher's writings were discussed in that conversation at all.⁴⁰⁴ For whatever reason, Socrates does not speak about the philosopher's speeches in the *Symposium* like he does in the *Phaedrus*, and we have but a snippet of what he has to say about the poet's art. Socrates' reticence about speech in the *Symposium* compels the reader to look elsewhere for the philosopher's examination of speech. Like the interpretation of the three speeches about *erōs* that are displayed in the *Phaedrus*, therefore, the interpretation of the speeches that Plato displays in the *Symposium* also relies on an interpretation of the discussion of speech in that dialogue.⁴⁰⁵ While Socrates' inquiries and comments about the three speeches that are displayed in

New York Press, 1993): 82-86; Evans, "Diotima and Demeter," 16-21; Luce Irigaray and Eleanor H. Kuykendall, "Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium, Diotima's Speech," *Hypatia*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1989): 40-44; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 224-242.

⁴⁰³ See Bacon, "Socrates Crowned," 422-430; Diskin Clay, "The Tragic and Comic Poet of the *Symposium*," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, new series, 2, no. 2 (1975): 238-261.

⁴⁰⁴ When Socrates asks the poets if comedy and tragedy do not in truth belong to the same art, he is not yet asking them about the nobility of speeches. Unlike the discussion in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates does not explicitly speculate about an art of speech that should dictate all speeches in the *Symposium*. Cf. *Phaedrus* 258d, 270c-272b, 278b-e.

⁴⁰⁵ For an insightful interpretation of Socrates' speech in the *Symposium* in the light of Socrates' comments about writing in the *Phaedrus*, see Anderson, *The Masks of Dionysos*, 82-100. In addition to presenting "two concepts of immortality" (82), Socrates' speech in the *Symposium* also describes various kinds of *erōs* or erotic pursuits in juxtaposition.

the *Phaedrus* in the same dialogue facilitate the interpretation of those speeches, Plato does not display similar inquiries about the speeches that he displays in the *Symposium*. To offset Socrates' reticence about speech in the *Symposium*, I will now reiterate three related insights or observations that can be derived from the philosopher's examination of speech in the *Phaedrus*. The interpretation of the speeches that Plato displays in the *Symposium* will rely on these insights or observations.

While all three insights that I derive from Socrates' examination of speech in the *Phaedrus* help to shed light on the rhetorical action of the speeches that Plato displays, including the action of Socrates' distinct praise of Eros in the *Symposium*, the first of these insights focuses on the "moral" dimension of that action. Since the speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* are all display (or "epideictic"⁴⁰⁶) speeches that either praise or blame *erōs* as a noble or shameful thing, they necessarily advance or appeal to some notion of nobility (and shamefulness).⁴⁰⁷ In addition to appealing to some notion of the nobility of *erōs*, moreover, the speeches are also composed according to some notion of the nobility of speech or *logos*. To succeed in either speech contest, the speakers must speak nobly about *erōs* as a noble or shameful thing. As one could infer from the various speeches about *erōs* and Socrates' examination of speech in the *Phaedrus*, which is initiated and sustained by Phaedrus' question about the nobility or reputation of speechwriting,⁴⁰⁸ there are diverse understandings about the

⁴⁰⁶ For a helpful discussion of epideictic, see Richard Hunter, *Plato's Symposium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 29-37. For an extensive study of epideictic as a literary form, see Burgess, *Epideictic Literature*.

⁴⁰⁷ Nightingale, "The Folly of Praise," 118. As Nightingale notes, "encomiastic discourse by definition offers value-judgements and prescriptions." See also Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 433-434; Kenneth Dorter, "A Dual Dialectic in the *Symposium*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25, no. 3 (1992): 255; Frisbee Sheffield, "The Symposium and Platonic Ethics: Plato, Vlastos, and a Misguided Debate," *Phronesis* 57 (2012): 125-128.

⁴⁰⁸ *Phaedrus* 257b-258e.

noble,⁴⁰⁹ and it is possible for a speaker to appeal to some established beliefs⁴¹⁰ about the noble and be unaffected by the same beliefs themselves.⁴¹¹ To compose some speech that would appear noble or seemly to his audience, in other words, a speaker could conceal or obfuscate⁴¹² his own beliefs about the noble in what he says about *erōs*. For instance, when Lysias reanimates the image of the deranged lover to establish the preferability of the non-lover who is not affected by the lover's "shameful" sufferings, Lysias is not simply praising the continence of the non-lover. Though it appeals to a conception of the noble which sees the sufferings of the deranged lover as shameful things, Lysias' speech is not simply a vindication of the same moral outlook about these sufferings. By displaying his ability to refute the lover's typical demands for reciprocity, Lysias in truth advances a concealed conception of the noble by praising the continence of the non-lover. That is, the "nobility" or "manliness"⁴¹³ of the speechwriter who can manipulate the customary understandings of the noble to advance or legitimize his own "unerotic" pursuits through speech. Though one could argue that the "nobility" of continence and the "manliness" of the "unerotic" speechwriter are the related parts of a consistent moral outlook, it is important to note the concealment of the latter in Lysias' speech and what this concealment shows about the actions (and affections) of Lysias' soul.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 260a, 277d-e.

⁴¹⁰ As Socrates' failure to persuade Phaedrus through the palinode indicates, the speakers do not always know about their audiences' beliefs or tastes. Though some speakers, such as Lysias and Agathon, successfully exploit their audiences' tastes, it is unreliable to always identify the conception of the noble that the speakers exploit with the moral beliefs or tastes of their audience. Rather than displaying the conception of the noble that is held by any of Plato's characters (or Plato himself), the speakers could appeal to beliefs or preferences that they attribute (or misattribute) to their audience.

⁴¹¹ For instance, when Socrates deceives Phaedrus about the arduousness of the true art of speech, he does not necessarily believe that the Asclepiads would examine the nature of things in a dialectical or Socratic way. See *Phaedrus* 270c-272b.

⁴¹² See *Symposium* 216d. It is in this dialogue that Alcibiades accuses Socrates of being ironic. However, Socrates is not the only character in these dialogues who plays with irony.

⁴¹³ *Phaedrus* 265a.

Of course, to identify the concealment of a speaker's beliefs about the noble or what they attempt to accomplish in their speeches of praise and blame about *erōs*—"to bring to the light the resemblances produced and disguised by anyone"⁴¹⁴—is to say that these things are not perfectly hidden in the speeches that Plato displays. Yet it is only when one responds to Socrates' inquiries and remarks about speech in the *Phaedrus* that one begins to realize that there are more to the speeches than meets the eye. Both remaining insights that I derive from Socrates' examination of speech facilitate the exposition of these partially concealed things. Instead of focusing on the moral dimension of the action of the speeches or the various conceptions of the noble that are advanced (or exploited) by the speakers, these insights highlight the significance of the organization of speech and the relationship between organization and rhetorical action.

The importance of the organization of speech is highlighted in the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* when the interlocutors decide to "look in the speech of Lysias...for something which we think shows art and the lack of art."⁴¹⁵ After the introduction of Lysias' speech was read for a second time, Socrates comments on the absence of a definition of *erōs* and asks Phaedrus if he knows of the "rhetorical reason" (*anagkēn logographikēn*) of the arrangement of the various parts of Lysias' speech.⁴¹⁶ By asking this question, Socrates attempts to lead Phaedrus to reflect on the persuasiveness of Lysias' speech despite its apparent failure to begin with a definition of *erōs*. Though Phaedrus is unable to respond to Socrates' inquiries,⁴¹⁷ Socrates' unanswered questions

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 261e.

⁴¹⁵ *Phaedrus* 262c. The organization of speech is discussed in the final section of Aristotle's treatise. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1414a-1420a.

⁴¹⁶ *Phaedrus* 264b.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

lead the careful reader to conduct close examinations of Lysias' speech and similar speeches. What is the "rhetorical reason" of the organization of the various speeches of praise and blame about *erōs*, and how are their various parts "composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole"?⁴¹⁸ Since all the speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays are 1) complete speeches that are composed of various related parts and 2) the related parts of Plato's dialogues, the response to Socrates' questions about the organization of speech is necessarily two-fold. In other words, Socrates' inquiries about the organization of speech in the *Phaedrus* contains not one but two related insights that can be used for examining the speeches that Plato displays.

As such, the second insight that can be derived from Socrates' examination of speech in the *Phaedrus* leads Plato's audience to examine the organization of the various speeches about *erōs* as complete speeches that are composed of related parts. As the interpretation of the three speeches in the *Phaedrus* has shown, the ambiguous or concealed actions of the various speeches can be better understood if they are examined in such a Socratic manner. For instance, by considering the organization of Lysias' speech as a whole or how its various parts are related to each other and the whole speech, one could understand its charm despite Lysias' "failure" to begin with an explicit definition of *erōs*. By tracing out its internal organization as a complete speech—the "backward" depictions of the various actions and sufferings of the deranged lover and the non-lover through contrasting pairs—it becomes possible to identify the rhetorical action of Lysias' speech or how it creates the resemblance between *erōs* and some shameful thing. To demonstrate his abilities as a clever speechwriter to Phaedrus, a lover of

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 264c.

speeches who is familiar with the famous myths, Lysias tacitly organizes his censure of *erōs* like the dramatic depictions of the famous love story between Jason and Medea to reanimate and reinforce Phaedrus' established beliefs about *erōs* and the shameful sufferings that it brings to the deranged lover. The examination of the "rhetorical reason" behind the organization of the various parts of Lysias' speech, in other words, facilitates the identification of the mythopoetic basis of its rhetorical action on Phaedrus' soul. Indeed, the actions of Socrates' speeches in the *Phaedrus* can also be clarified if the reader examines the relations between the various parts of these speeches. Socrates' censure of *erōs*, for instance, contains a remarkable "dislocation" of narrative which obscures its meaning as a whole. Since Phaedrus understands Socrates' speech as a censure of the lover rather than the "non-lover,"⁴¹⁹ he seems to have failed to remember the things that Socrates says in the introduction of the same speech and what it had shown. Put differently, one's interpretation of the action of Socrates' speech changes greatly if one considers the action of its "body" in the light of the action of its "head." Rather than a straightforward censure of *erōs*, Socrates' first speech in the *Phaedrus* is in truth a concealed or ironic censure of the hubristic lover who seeks to woo the beloved by pretending to be a "non-lover." Likewise, Socrates' mythopoetic depiction of the journey of the philosopher's soul is not simply a criticism of Lysias as a speechwriter.⁴²⁰ By displaying the various kinds of *erōs* and the various effects that *erōs* has on human lives, Socrates facilitates and praises the philosopher's mad or unconventional examinations of the highest things and their boons for both the philosophical lover and his beloved. In short, to attain a clear understanding of the actions of the various speeches about *erōs* that

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 241d.

⁴²⁰ *Phaedrus* 257b-c.

Plato displays, one ought to examine them as complete speeches that are composed of related parts which are organized in a way that would contribute to some rhetorical end.

Like the second insight, the third insight that I derive from Socrates' examination of speech in the *Phaedrus* is also extrapolated from his unanswered inquiries about the organization of speech. Instead of examining the organization of the speeches about *erōs* as wholes, however, this insight directs the reader to examine the various speeches about *erōs* as the related parts of Plato's dialogues. Oftentimes, the action of a speech remains concealed unless its contents—what the speaker says about *erōs* as a praiseworthy or blameworthy thing—are carefully compared to the contents of the other speeches or the other parts of the same dialogue. Synoptically, the speeches about *erōs* in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* are organized in some linear fashion where one speech is placed after another.⁴²¹ As such, the speeches that are “spoken” later in these dialogues can respond to some preceding speech but not vice versa. Like the “dialogic” exchanges that can be found throughout the Platonic dialogues, therefore, the lengthier speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays can also be understood in relation to the various powers and affects of the souls of the various speakers. When a speaker praises or censures *erōs* (or Eros) through speech, the speaker both acts on the souls of his audience and responds to the other speeches about *erōs*.⁴²² To identify the action of a speech about *erōs* and the overall structure of the action of the dialogues,⁴²³ one must identify the relations between

⁴²¹ Clay, “The Tragic and Comic Poet,” 241.

⁴²² Bacon, “Socrates Crowned,” 426-427.

⁴²³ For discussions of the holistic organization and action of the *Symposium*, see Dorter, “A Dual Dialectic,” 253-270; Sean Steel, “*Katabasis* in Plato's *Symposium*,” *Interpretation* 31, no. 1 (2003): 59-83. While I agree with Dorter that there is an “ascent” in the *Symposium* toward Socrates' speech, I also detect a “descent,” as Steel does, in the various speeches prior to Socrates' speech. For an interpretation of the organization of the speeches in terms of “the progressive though dubiously fated evolution” of Plato's culture (214), see Charles Salman, “Anthropogony and Theogony in Plato's *Symposium*,” *The Classical Journal* 86, no. 3 (1991): 214-225. For Salman, Plato displays Socrates' response to the earlier speakers “to

the various speeches as the various parts of the dialogues as wholes. As Socrates discloses when he speaks about his own speeches in the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, the examination of his disparate speeches about *erōs* could make use of the “two principles”⁴²⁴ of “division and bringing together, as aids to speech and thought.”⁴²⁵ To identify what Socrates does in both of his speeches to both censures of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*—how each of Socrates’ speeches respond to the preceding speech—one could rely on these Socratic principles or processes to examine the various things that are said about *erōs*. Just as Socrates’ censure of *erōs* “acts” on Lysias’ speech by exposing the deceptive eroticism of the clever lover who pretends to be a non-lover, Socrates’ palinode “acts” on the censures of *erōs* by integrating the hubristic kind of *erōs* or madness into a more complete account of the human soul. To understand the otherwise concealed actions of Socrates’ speeches about *erōs*, one must imitate Socrates and philosophize about *erōs* as a complex phenomenon that contains both praiseworthy and blameworthy parts.⁴²⁶

Likewise, the interpretation of the various speeches about *erōs* that Plato displays in the *Symposium* will also consider the actions of the various speakers as they seek to persuade (or act on) the souls of the other interlocutors through speech. Unlike the *Phaedrus*, however, the *Symposium* does not contain elaborate depictions of the interlocutors’ reactions to the speeches that they hear. Aside from the applauds⁴²⁷ and

reorient his sophisticated polis in an effort to avert the impending *telos*” (219). Like Salman, I detect a gradual “ascent” in terms of the rhetorical power of the various speakers prior to Socrates’ speech, which is accompanied by a “descent” of the standard of truthfulness or goodness.

⁴²⁴ *Phaedrus* 265d.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 266b.

⁴²⁶ See Atsushi Hayase, “Dialectic in the *Phaedrus*,” *Phronesis* 61, no. 2 (2016): 120. As Hayase notes, it is the processes of collection and division that allows Socrates to blame “human love” and praise “divine love.”

⁴²⁷ *Symposium* 198a, 212c.

the brief comments that are displayed in the interludes,⁴²⁸ Plato gives little indication of the reception of the various speeches about *erōs*. Though none of the speakers in the *Symposium* is persuaded by some preceding speech like Phaedrus is persuaded by Lysias' censure of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*, neither the narrators nor the interlocutors of the *Symposium* speak about the speeches in a way that would allow Plato's audience to compare the interlocutors' interpretations of the speeches against their own. To expose the concealed relations or interactions between the various parts of the *Symposium*—the actions and affects of the various speeches and souls that Plato displays—one could draw from Socrates' examination of his own speeches in the *Phaedrus* and philosophize about the various depictions of *erōs* as it is portrayed as “a god or something divine.”⁴²⁹ By collecting and dividing the various depictions of *erōs* in the various parts of Plato's *Symposium* as the philosopher would, one attains a clearer understanding of the speakers' actions as they display their wisdom about *erōs* and *logos*.

By relying on the interpretive insights that can be derived from Socrates' examination of speech in the *Phaedrus*, this chapter will demonstrate Plato's dissemination of the philosopher's art of thinking in the *Symposium*. Like his display of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, Plato displays a speech contest in the *Symposium* where Socrates is compelled to defend his love of wisdom in response to the non-philosophers' praises of Eros. By displaying these disparate speeches side by side, Plato allows his audience to compare the various speeches about *erōs* and philosophize about the moral worth of the various teachings about both *erōs* and *logos*. Like his speech about *erōs* in

⁴²⁸ For a succinct discussion of the interludes, see R.G. Bury, *The Symposium of Plato* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1909), xxii-xxiv.

⁴²⁹ *Phaedrus* 242e.

the *Phaedrus*,⁴³⁰ Socrates' praise of Eros in the *Symposium*—his display of Diotima's diverse teachings about *erōs*—also illuminate the action (and affect) of Plato's philosophical writing. In contrast to the non-Socratic speeches, Diotima's "perfect revelations of erotics" (210a) mirrors Socrates' depictions of "the desire of the true lovers" in the *Phaedrus*,⁴³¹ and both depictions of philosophical *erōs* are premised on mankind's capacity for dialectical thinking or philosophizing.⁴³² Both of Socrates' speeches about *erōs* praise the philosopher's erotic ascent to the sight of the immutable truths, the existence of which establishes and motivates the philosophers' examinations of the non-philosophers' teachings about the highest things or how best to live.⁴³³ Put differently, Plato defends the philosophers' love of wisdom in both dialogues by allowing his audience to examine philosophical *erōs* in a philosophical or dialectical manner. Only when the audience of Plato's philosophical writing examines the philosopher's love of wisdom in such a Socratic or dialectical manner would they be able to appreciate the beauty or goodness of philosophy as such.

I. The prologue

The *Symposium* is a narrated dialogue which encloses the speeches about *erōs* within a complex narrative frame.⁴³⁴ In response to the inquiry of some unnamed friend, Apollodorus recounts the conversation that he had had with someone named Glaucon not so long ago. Like the unnamed friend, Apollodorus says, this Glaucon had also wished to

⁴³⁰ In the discussion of speech, Socrates discusses his two speeches as if they were parts of a complete speech. See *Phaedrus* 265a-266a.

⁴³¹ *Phaedrus* 253c.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 249b-c; see also *Symposium* 209e-212a.

⁴³³ My formulation borrows from Harold Cherniss' brilliant thesis. See Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy," 447.

⁴³⁴ Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, xv-xix; Bacon, "Socrates Crowned," 418-419; Clay, "The Tragic and Comic Poet," 240; Hunter, *Plato's Symposium*, 20-29.

hear about “Agathon’s party—the one at which Socrates, Alcibiades and the others were then present at dinner together” and their speeches about *erōs* (172a-c). Since Apollodorus had only recently recounted the same events, he is not unpracticed⁴³⁵ about the things that the unnamed friend wishes to learn. As Apollodorus’ account of his recent conversation with Glaucon shows, he himself was not present at the banquet which took place many years ago—“at the time of Agathon’s victory with his first tragedy” (173a)⁴³⁶—when he and Glaucon were still young.⁴³⁷ As such, Apollodorus can only offer an imitation of the account of the events as told by Aristodemus, who was present at Agathon’s banquet and had told the same story to Phoenix—the informant of Glaucon’s unreliable source.⁴³⁸ A great many people, it seems, now wish to learn of the truth of these events, but few can tell it accurately. Those who wish to gossip about Alcibiades’ return to Athens⁴³⁹ or hear the speeches of these famous men are forced to rely on the followers of Socrates and their recollections.

Like Phaedrus in the *Phaedrus*, Apollodorus is also enthusiastic about recounting the things that he had heard. But unlike Phaedrus who walks beyond the city walls because the roads there are less fatiguing, Apollodorus walks with Glaucon because the

⁴³⁵ The phrase here is *ouk ameletētos*. Cf. *Symposium* 208a.

⁴³⁶ Agathon won first place in 416 BCE. See Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, lxvi, 170. For a detailed discussion of the extant testimonies, see David Sider, “Plato’s *Symposium* as Dionysian Festival,” *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series 4 (1980): 41-56.

⁴³⁷ If Glaucon had been a child during 416 BCE, then he could not be Plato’s older brother by the same name who is already an adult when Bendis is introduced to Athens around 430 BCE. See Christopher Planeaux, “The Date of Bendis’ Entry into Attica,” *The Classical Journal* 96, no. 2 (2000): 165-192. See also Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 13-15.

⁴³⁸ For a visual representation of this complex narrative frame, see Hunter, *Plato’s Symposium*, 23.

⁴³⁹ Scholars have produced differing speculations about the date of Apollodorus’ conversations. Strauss speculates that these conversations took place in response to Alcibiades’ return to Athens before the end of the Peloponnesian War, when it is no longer taboo to gossip about the infamous general. Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 20-25. Martha Nussbaum suggests that the conversations took place shortly before Alcibiades’ death in 404. Martha Nussbaum, “The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Philosophy and Literature* 3, no. 2 (1979): 135-137. Bury convincingly argues that Apollodorus’ conversations took place between 408 and 399 BCE. See Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, lxvi.

path toward town “is as suitable for speaking, while we walk, as for listening” (173b). In addition to walking and speaking with someone named Glaucon,⁴⁴⁰ Apollodorus’ enthusiasm about philosophical speeches and his ability to accurately recount them also suggest that he is similar to Socrates in a few important respects.⁴⁴¹ Rather than simply recounting Socrates’ speech about *erōs* like some closeminded disciple who disseminates the master’s unambiguous teachings,⁴⁴² however, both Apollodorus and Aristodemus relate to others some near complete account of the events from the beginning. By displaying Socrates’ speeches beside the speeches of the other interlocutors, these followers of Socrates also resemble Plato. Like Plato, they also heed to Socrates’ remarks about the organization of the philosopher’s artful speech.⁴⁴³ Instead of creating “an elaborately indirect, distant, and distancing relationship between reader and philosophic discourse,”⁴⁴⁴ the narrative frame of the *Symposium* in truth facilitates the audience’s participation in the philosophers’ recollected dialogue and the philosophers’ unspoken examinations of the various speeches.⁴⁴⁵ By enclosing the speeches about *erōs* within the recounted conversations between the followers of Socrates, Plato passes the torch⁴⁴⁶ of

⁴⁴⁰ See Roger Hornsby, “Significant Action in the *Symposium*,” *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (1956): 38. Hornsby insightfully identifies the parallel between walking and loving, that “the lover rightly searches for, hunts out, the beloved which is unmoving.” Glaucon’s name reminds of Athena, the grey-eyed goddess, who walks with Odysseus. Cf. *Odyssey*, VII, 1-89.

⁴⁴¹ *Republic* 327a. For a similar assessment of Apollodorus’ “madness,” see Harry Neumann, “On the Madness of Plato’s Apollodorus,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 96 (1965): 283-289.

⁴⁴² Cf. Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 10-16.

⁴⁴³ Apollodorus calls the story that he recounts a speech about philosophy. See *Symposium* 173c.

⁴⁴⁴ William A. Johnson, “Dramatic Frame and Philosophic Idea in Plato,” *American Journal of Philology*, 119, no. 4 (1998): 583.

⁴⁴⁵ Bacon, “Socrates Crowned,” 419.

⁴⁴⁶ *Republic*, 328a. Like the interlocutors of the *Republic*, the symposiasts (and the narrators) also spend their time spectating and participating in a “torch race” of speeches. See Hornsby, “Action in the *Symposium*,” 40.

philosophy to those who would also recollect or think about these speeches as the philosophers would.

According to Apollodorus, Aristodemus' account of the evening begins with his meeting with an unusually adorned Socrates who is on his way to Agathon's party. Socrates says that he did not attend Agathon's victory celebration the day before because he was afraid of the crowd, and that he had agreed to attend the smaller party today upon Agathon's invitation (174a). He had just bathed and is wearing slippers so he can attend the beauty's party in a fitting manner, compensating for his uninviting poverty and ugly features.⁴⁴⁷ When Socrates persuades Aristodemus to go with him, however, Socrates upsets this standard of appropriateness. Socrates invites someone who is just as ill-shod as he is to the party of the same beauty, when this uninvited guest of his is not even washed.⁴⁴⁸ To suppress the inappropriateness of his invitation of Aristodemus, Socrates accuses Homer, who not only corrupts the proverbial customs by an alteration of words, but also "committed an outrage [*hybris*]" by making Menelaus the "soft spearman" attend Agamemnon's party uninvited (174b-c). To legitimize his invitation of the unadorned and unshod Aristodemus who is not pleasant to behold, the well-adorned Socrates introduces a different set of rules, replacing beauty with goodness. It is Aristodemus' goodness that legitimizes his attendance at the beauty's party. However, Socrates does not clearly say that Aristodemus' goodness is identical to Agamemnon's prowess in battle, nor does Socrates respond to Aristodemus' claim that he is a "good-for-nothing going uninvited to a wiseman's dinner" (174c). In this brief exchange, Plato's Socrates juxtaposes three different conceptions of the noble, which foreshadows the various conceptions of nobility

⁴⁴⁷ See *Symposium* 203d; *Theaetetus* 143e.

⁴⁴⁸ See *Symposium* 175a.

(beauty, manliness, and goodness) that the various symposiasts will employ in their speeches. When Socrates “turned his attention to himself and was left behind” (174d), it is possible that he is engaging in some examination of these different conceptions of the noble. Socrates is compelled to examine the appropriateness of his invitation of Aristodemus when he does not yet know if the beautiful Agathon offers a feast that the good should willingly attend.⁴⁴⁹

Prior to Socrates’ arrival, Apollodorus says, Agathon commanded his slaves “to serve in any case whatever you want...in the belief that I, your master, as much as the others, has been invited to dinner by you, serve in such a way that we may praise you” (175b-c). Agathon commands them to serve him and his guests not according to his dictates as their master, but according to their own tastes or judgements about the praiseworthy as if they themselves were the true masters.⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, Agathon’s innovative manners as a host complicates the appropriateness of Socrates’ invitation of the good Aristodemus. Instead of attending the party of someone whose name means “good” as someone whom Socrates calls good, Aristodemus awkwardly sits in the party of the slaves of this nominally “good” man. Since it is unlikely that Agathon’s slaves share Agathon’s nominal goodness, it is unclear if Socrates’ justification for Aristodemus’ attendance is still valid. Indeed, by allowing his slaves to host the party, Agathon unwittingly corrupts the proverb for a third time. Instead of making the inferior man attend the party of the superior man uninvited, Agathon makes the good man attend the party of his slaves, who are certainly inferior to Aristodemus in terms of their social status. Of course, the goodness of Agathon’s slaves is far less intriguing than Agathon’s

⁴⁴⁹ See *Phaedrus* 247a-b, 248b.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. *Phaedrus* 273e-274a.

delegation of duties and Aristodemus' recollection of this innovative act. By allowing the slaves to speculate about the master's tastes as if they were the true masters, Agathon's innovation foreshadows the impiety⁴⁵¹ of the various speakers who are to demonstrate the goodness of a god according to their own human tastes.

Banter ensues when Socrates finally arrives at the party, when the others "were just about in the middle of dinner" (175c). Straight away, Agathon asks his ill-mannered guest to sit beside him, "so that by my touching you, I too may enjoy the piece of wisdom that just occurred to you while you were in the porch" (175c-d). Socrates ripostes by suggesting that it would be good for him to sit beside Agathon "if wisdom were the sort of thing that flows from the fuller of us into the emptier" (175d). His own wisdom, Socrates says, "may turn out to be a sorry sort...disputable like a dream," but Agathon's wisdom is "brilliant and capable of much development...and yesterday it became conspicuous among more than thirty thousand Greek witnesses" (175e). Socrates does not reject Agathon's claim that he had attained some wisdom while standing in the neighbour's porch, only that it is disputable or of "a sorry sort."⁴⁵² Instead of telling Agathon that it is difficult to attain this disputable wisdom, Socrates thwarts the need to recount his thoughts to Agathon by likening the human arm to a thread of wool, placed in two cups filled with different volumes of wine. As someone who had just won with his very first tragedy, it is natural for Agathon to transfer his wisdom to Socrates but not vice

⁴⁵¹ Indeed, Agathon's victory in 416 BCE anticipates the disastrous Sicilian Expedition, the desecration of the Hermae, and the profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Alcibiades is involved in all these events, along with a few of the other symposiasts. See Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, lxvi; Salman, "Anthropogony and Theogony," 216-217; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 14-15.

⁴⁵² Socrates describes his wisdom as *phaulos*, which means insignificant or base. It is the same word that Aristodemus uses to describe himself. Later, Diotima identifies Penia or poverty as the mother of Eros. It could be added to the list of "the Socratic epithets [Clay's italics]" of "ἄτοπος and γελοῖος." Clay, "The Tragic and Comic Poet," 243. For most Athenians, Socrates is strange, laughable, and base. Cf. *Symposium* 173d.

versa. When Agathon accuses Socrates of being “outrageous,”⁴⁵³ however, it is unclear if he is responding to Socrates’ reference to Hesiod’s poem where “thirty thousand immortal spirits” are said to “keep watch for Zeus and all that men do.”⁴⁵⁴ Agathon does not directly respond to Socrates’ admonition about Zeus’ witnesses, who “are aware of those who by crooked decisions break other men and care nothing for what the gods think of it.”⁴⁵⁵ Instead, Agathon invokes Dionysus as the judge of their eventual contest of wisdom.⁴⁵⁶

After dinner, Apollodorus says, Pausanias began to speak about the manner of the drinking.⁴⁵⁷ Since most of them got drunk the night before, these enfeebled partygoers readily agree to Eryximachus’ advice “not to make the present party a drinking bout, but for each to drink as he pleased.”⁴⁵⁸ In addition to the restriction on excessive drinking, Eryximachus the Asclepiad also recommends the dismissal of “the flute girl who just came in” (176e). In effect, the physician prohibits both drunkenness and sexual

⁴⁵³ For a discussion of Socrates’ outrage or *hybris* in the *Symposium*, see Michael Gagarin, “Socrates’ *Hybris* and Alcibiades’ Failure,” *Phoenix* 31, no.1 (1977): 22-37. As Gagarin notes, the word is repeatedly used by the various speakers and generally “indicates some sort of insolent violence” (25). Moreover, Gagarin correctly identifies Socrates’ outrage with his irony (33). However, it is unconvincing that Plato sides with Alcibiades and identifies Socrates as the cause of Alcibiades’ failures. For less hostile interpretations of Socrates’ ironic eroticism, see Mateo Duque, “Two Passions in Plato’s *Symposium*: Diotima’s To Kalon as a Reorientation of Imperialistic *Erōs*,” in *Looking at Beauty to Kalon in Western Greece: Selected Essays from the 2018 Symposium on the Heritage of Western Greece*, ed. Heather L. Reid and Tony Leyh (Fonte Aretusa: Parnassos Press, 2019), 95-110; Will Desmond, “The *hybris* of Socrates: A Platonic ‘reevaluation of values’ in the *Symposium*,” *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* (2005): 43-63. Mary Nichols, “Philosophy and Empire, On Socrates’ and Alcibiades in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Polity* 39, no. 4 (2007): 502-521. For Socrates’ account of *hybris* or excess and its dialectical relation to *erōs*, see *Phaedrus* 238a-c.

⁴⁵⁴ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. Richard Lattimore (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959), 248-255.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 250-251.

⁴⁵⁶ For a discussion of the role of Dionysus in the *Symposium*, see Anderson, *The Masks of Dionysos*, 7-15.

⁴⁵⁷ *Symposium* 176a.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176e.

pleasure⁴⁵⁹ and replaces these entertainments with speeches. As it turns out, Eryximachus proposes that each of them shall “recite the fairest praise of Eros that he can” to please his beloved Phaedrus, who has allegedly complained many times to him about the failure of the poets and the sophists to write a eulogy of this great god.⁴⁶⁰ While Eryximachus’ proposal reminds of the “noble pastime” of the artful writer who writes “to treasure up reminders for himself...when others engage in other amusements, refreshing themselves with banquets and kindred entertainments,”⁴⁶¹ it is questionable that Eryximachus’ proposal to be entertained by speeches about Eros is based on a rejection of the pleasures that he has just banished. While the entertainment of speeches is certainly less demanding on the body, it is not readily evident that the symposiasts will derive from speech a kind of pleasure that is distinct from the pleasures of sex or drunkenness.⁴⁶²

Indeed, Eryximachus’ proposal is itself led by an erotic impulse—he wishes to gratify the desires of his beloved. Intriguingly, it was Phaedrus the beloved who spoke to give support to Eryximachus’ earlier proposal to banish excessive drinking, which helped to pave the path toward the proposal that they shall be entertained by speeches that praised Eros. Here, after these well-received suggestions, Eryximachus introduces yet another proposal, that “Phaedrus should be the first to begin, inasmuch as he is lying on

⁴⁵⁹ Although not all flute girls were prostitutes in Classical Greece, the sexual connotation is clear. For a detailed discussion, see Max L. Goldman, “Associating the Aulêtris: Flute Girls and Prostitutes in the Classical Greek Symposium,” *Helios* 42, no. 1 (2015): 29-60.

⁴⁶⁰ *Symposium* 177a-d. As Bury notes, both Sophocles and Euripides had displayed “eulogies” of Eros in their plays. See Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, 19. Cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 781-800; Euripides, *Hippolytus* 525-564.

⁴⁶¹ *Phaedrus* 276e.

⁴⁶² Cf. *Republic* 328d-329d. Here, Cephalus claims that old age has weakened the bodily desires which he calls his “mad masters,” and that he now desires the pleasure of speech instead. It is questionable, however, that the pleasures which he derives from speech is different from the bodily pleasures that he pursued as a younger man.

the head couch and is also the father of the argument.”⁴⁶³ Like Phaedrus who rigs the speech contest to favour his beloved Lysias in the *Phaedrus*,⁴⁶⁴ Eryximachus the lover also gives Phaedrus the advantage at this speech contest. By allowing Phaedrus to speak first, Eryximachus removes the risk that Phaedrus’ “pre-prepared” speech⁴⁶⁵ might repeat some earlier speech and the need to get the better of what is already said. Though Socrates complains about this set of rules that “it is not quite fair for those of us who lie on the last couches,” he nevertheless agrees to participating in the contest “if those who come first speak in a fine and adequate way.”⁴⁶⁶ After all, Socrates is someone who has “expert knowledge of nothing but erotics,” and none of the other participants—Agathon, Pausanias, and Aristophanes—would reject such a proposal due to their own commitments to Eros.⁴⁶⁷ At the same time, Socrates does not offer any clarification about his art of love or how it is related to the erotic pursuits of the other symposiasts. To find out, one must compare the various speeches in terms of the various things that the speakers say to praise Eros.

II. *Phaedrus’ speech*

As several scholars have noted, Phaedrus’ praise of Eros is disingenuous.⁴⁶⁸ Rather than praising Eros and his divine powers as a god, Phaedrus’ deceptive speech in truth praises the benefits that he receives as an “unerotic” beloved. Beneath his apparent praise of the courageous or noble deeds that are sometimes inspired by *erōs*, Phaedrus

⁴⁶³ *Symposium* 177d.

⁴⁶⁴ *Phaedrus* 235c-236e.

⁴⁶⁵ For a similar observation, see Anthony Hooper, “The Greatest Hope of All: Aristophanes on Human Nature in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *The Classical Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2013): 576.

⁴⁶⁶ *Phaedrus* 177e.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 455-456; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 37-38; Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 50-54; Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 52-56.

tacitly defends the superiority of a form of “manliness” that is exemplified by his deceptive speech—an “art” of speech that is not motivated by one’s love for another human being.⁴⁶⁹ In other words, Phaedrus’ speech in the *Symposium* embodies Lysias’ teachings in the *Phaedrus*. Whereas Lysias had cleverly used the myth of Jason and Medea to reanimate the harms of *erōs* and the benefits that the “unerotic” beloved receives from his lovers, Phaedrus conceals his praise of selfish gain by juxtaposing Achilles’ success as an “unerotic” beloved with the less gainful descents into Hades of the erotic heroes.

A. The organization of Phaedrus’ speech

Phaedrus’ speech is composed of disconnected and contradictory parts that fail to demonstrate the praiseworthiness of Eros in a systematic way.⁴⁷⁰ Despite what Phaedrus says about the greatness of Eros at the beginning and end of his speech, much of his demonstration points to the limitations of the “god” in terms of his ability or power to contribute to human virtue. In addition to his omissions about the gods’ immortality in his introductory remarks about the oldness of Eros,⁴⁷¹ the arguments that Phaedrus employs to demonstrate Eros’ beneficial effects on mortals also undermine his superficial claims about the god’s greatness. While it is possible to infer from Phaedrus’ incoherent speech⁴⁷² that he is simply a weak speaker who is unable to praise Eros in a coherent manner, the wayward structure of his speech can also be understood as a crude strategy of deception. Phaedrus obscures the action of his speech by juxtaposing explicit praises of

⁴⁶⁹ See Seth Benardete, “Achilles and the Iliad,” *Hermes* 91, no. 1 (1963): 1-16; Paul Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff, vol.3, *Second and Third Periods* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969), 12.

⁴⁷⁰ Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 458.

⁴⁷¹ Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 48.

⁴⁷² Cf. Grube, *Plato’s Thought*, 97. Grube argues that Phaedrus unambiguously represents Eros “as an inspiration to noble deeds.”

Eros and arguments or examples that tacitly undermine the god's praiseworthiness. By organizing the various parts of his speech in this manner, Phaedrus conceals his beliefs about the superiority of the "unerotic" beloved and disguises himself as someone who admires the lovers' virtuous or noble sacrifices. Phaedrus' use of deception, which relies on the manipulation of the myths, indicates a persistent interest in the approachable art of speech of the rhetoricians after his conversation with Socrates in the *Phaedrus*.⁴⁷³ Like Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus*, Phaedrus' deceptive speech in truth praises the "unerotic" way of life of the rhetorician whom he admires.

B. Phaedrus' qualified praise of Eros

Contrary to his initial and final claims about the greatness of Eros as a god, a close examination of Phaedrus' depictions of the nature of Eros and his actions in human lives reveals the implicit limitations of his power. Relying on the testimony of three mythographers, Phaedrus begins by showing that Eros does not have parents and is therefore among the oldest beings.⁴⁷⁴ The unbegotten nature of the god, according to Phaedrus, implies that this god must be older than the gods (and all other creatures) who are brought into existence by the process of sexual reproduction.⁴⁷⁵ Here, Phaedrus

⁴⁷³ Although it is possible that the events of the *Phaedrus* took place after the *Symposium*, some scholars have argued that the dramatic date of the *Phaedrus* is between 418 and 416 BCE, which means that it could have taken place prior to Agathon's victory in 416 BCE. If this is the case, then Phaedrus' claim that no one has praised Eros suggests that he has either forgotten about Socrates' speech on that soporific afternoon, or that he has deliberately practiced his own speech to reject Socrates' previous claims. See Kenneth J. Dover, *Lysias and the Corpus Lysiacum* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 42-43; De Vries, *The Phaedrus of Plato*, 7.

⁴⁷⁴ Despite the different accounts of the oldest being (Chaos or Genesis) in the various myths, Eros comes second in terms of oldness and is therefore among the oldest beings (ὁ Ἔρως ἐν τοῖς πρεσβύτατος εἶναι 178c). As Rosen notes, the oldest beings can be either gods or cosmic principles and are further removed from human beings than Eros is. See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 46-47.

⁴⁷⁵ If Chaos or Genesis as the oldest being had parents who reproduced through sex, then Eros' lack of parents could not be used as evidence to demonstrate his oldness. Strauss interprets genesis as "a nondivine cause," which removes the difficulty that is caused by Eros' relative youth in Parmenides' theogony. See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 47. However, the divinity of Genesis would not be so problematic if Phaedrus does not wish to prove that Eros is the oldest, but only among the oldest.

inserts a second claim: the oldest being is the cause of the greatest goods for human beings.⁴⁷⁶ Since Eros is one of the oldest beings and the oldest being causes the greatest goods, Phaedrus says, Eros must be the cause of the greatest goods. However, a problem arises if one is strict about semantics. Eros is not the oldest being according to the poets or the mythmakers whom Phaedrus quotes. Either Chaos or Genesis is the oldest. If one accepts an unstated premise of Phaedrus' argument that older beings cause greater goods than younger ones, then Phaedrus' claims would imply that Eros causes greater goods than everything save Chaos, Genesis, or whomever is the oldest.⁴⁷⁷ However, if goodness and oldness does not correlate in this manner beyond the superlative goodness of the oldest being, then the praiseworthiness of Eros is indeterminate. Since Phaedrus does not unambiguously claim that the second oldest being (Eros or Eros and Gaia) cause as much good as the oldest being,⁴⁷⁸ it is not entirely clear if Eros is the cause of any good at all. Phaedrus could eliminate this ambiguity by saying that all the unbegotten beings are equally old and equally good, but that is not what he does.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ *Symposium* 178c.

⁴⁷⁷ According to the theogonies of Hesiod and Akousilaus, Gaia and Eros would be equally old and equally good. It is interesting that Phaedrus mentions Akousilaus' agreement with Hesiod after quoting Parmenides, who disagrees with the other two. In other words, Phaedrus does not prefer Parmenides' account over the other two. Cf. Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 47.

⁴⁷⁸ This ambiguity arises from the differences between *πρεσβύτατος* (oldest) and *ἐν τοῖς πρεσβύτατος* (among the oldest). Phaedrus does not clearly say that all older beings cause greater goods than younger ones.

⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, Phaedrus omits a few things about the gods in his quotation of Hesiod's *Theogony*. See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 46-50. Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 47. Rather than a safe foundation for all the immortals who dwell upon the peak of snowy Olympus or within the pits of murky Tartarus, Phaedrus renders Gaia to be the safe seat of all (Phaedrus keeps the word "always" (*αἰεῖ*) from the original, but it does not capture the immortality of the gods on its own. In the original text, *αἰεῖ* emphasizes the immortality of all the undying ones (*πάντων... ἄθανάτων* *Theogony* 127-128) who inhabit the highest and lowest extremities of Gaia). While this rendition does not disrupt the chronology of Hesiod's theogony, it does suppress the centrality of the immortal gods in Hesiod's account. Phaedrus characterizes the gods as marvelous and ancient beings, but he does not acknowledge their immortality. Moreover, Phaedrus' argument about the oldness of Eros as an unbegotten being can be understood as a response to Socrates' brief demonstration of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedrus*. According to Socrates' argument in the palinode, all souls are immortal because all souls are ungenerated self-movers (*Phaedrus* 245c-246a). If the soul is generated or begotten by something else and is entirely moved by external things like everything

After these obscure claims about the marvelousness of Eros as an ancient or old being, Phaedrus shifts to a demonstration of the beneficial impacts of the god on human lives. Since one's participation in some love affair produces feelings of "shame in the face of shameful things and honorable ambition in the face of beautiful things," Phaedrus says, neither kinship nor honour nor wealth enables mankind to live as nobly as Eros does.⁴⁸⁰ According to this formulation, Eros contributes to human virtue because he has the power to stimulate greater feelings of shame and honour in both the lover and the beloved than the other things. Like the lover who feels a great amount of distress when his beloved sees him doing or suffering some shameful thing, the beloved is also "exceptionally shamed before his lovers whenever he is seen to be involved in something shameful."⁴⁸¹ A city or a band of warriors composed of lovers and their beloveds, Phaedrus adds, would "win over just about all human beings" because of their susceptibility to such feelings (179a). Here, Phaedrus subtly restricts the rest of his account to the lovers and leaves the beloveds behind.⁴⁸² Since no man is so defective that Eros cannot inspire him toward virtue so that he becomes similar to the best by nature, Phaedrus says, the lover will surely choose to suffer everything else including death rather than being seen by his beloved "deserting his post or throwing away his weapons" (179a).

else in the cosmos that dies when it "ceases to move" (ibid 245c), then "all the heavens and all generation must fall in ruin and stop and never again have any source of motion or origin" (245e). Since the soul can be distinguished (or divided) from things that cannot be moved without an external mover, Socrates argues, the soul as ungenerated self-mover must be the nature of the immortal gods who govern or move the soulless things in the cosmos (246b-c). Unlike Socrates, Phaedrus does not use the ungenerated or unbegotten nature of Eros to speculate about the immortality of the god. Instead, the unbegotten-ness of Eros is used as evidence for his oldness.

⁴⁸⁰ *Symposium* 178d.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 178e.

⁴⁸² Achilles the beloved is introduced at 179e, and he is said to be unaffected by Eros (180a-b).

According to Phaedrus' account thus far, Eros is the cause of the greatest goods for human beings because it can produce feelings of shame in both the lover and the beloved and aid the lovers in their virtuous acts of courage. For Phaedrus, feelings of honour and shame depends on the presence of an external observer,⁴⁸³ and the power of the other's gaze is particularly strong when the observer happens to be a lover or beloved. In addition to their mutual feelings of shame for shameful things, however, only the lover will "choose to be dead many times over" before abandoning his beloved on the battlefield.⁴⁸⁴ Those who are inspired by Eros will do courageous or virtuous things in the presence of their beloveds, but the uninspired beloveds will not act in the same way for the same reason. Indeed, Phaedrus' juxtaposition of the lover and the best by nature suggests that Eros is not the only source of virtue. As Leo Strauss notes:

The erotically inspired is not the best by nature. He is not even equal to him, he is similar. The best by nature will fight the heaviest odds; so will the lover, but only when seen. The best by nature will do it simply. The praise of Eros, then, is amazingly qualified.⁴⁸⁵

The irony of Phaedrus' "praise" of Eros becomes even clearer if the three mythical examples that he displays in the rest of his speech are compared. According to Phaedrus, both Alcestis and Orpheus are lovers of their respective spouses, although only Alcestis is inspired to die for her beloved.⁴⁸⁶ Orpheus, on the other hand, "had not dared to die for

⁴⁸³ Anderson, *The Masks of Dionysos*, 22. As Anderson notes, Phaedrus "is concerned not with what one does, but with what one gets caught at." See also Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 52-53; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 49.

⁴⁸⁴ *Symposium* 179a.

⁴⁸⁵ Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 49.

⁴⁸⁶ Alcestis is not characterized as a lover of Admetus in Euripides' version of the story. Instead, she reminds Admetus of her sacrifices and is preoccupied with the fate of her children, who would suffer or die if Admetus dies. See Euripides, *Alcestis*, 280-394. Diotima will reinterpret Alcestis' sacrifice in terms of her love of renown, which can in turn be understood as the manifestation of the mortals' love of immortality. See *Symposium* 208c-208e. If both speakers are relying on Euripides' adaptation, then Diotima offers a more accurate interpretation of Alcestis' "erotic" sacrifices. Interestingly, Alcestis the lover saves both herself and her children, while Jason the "nonlover" loses his children. Cf. *Phaedrus* 276b-277a.

love.”⁴⁸⁷ Unlike Alcestis’ courageous sacrifice which helped both her beloved and herself to live, Orpheus’ live descent into Hades both lessened his reward and caused his own death “at the hands of women.”⁴⁸⁸ Since Phaedrus does not say that Alcestis loved Admetus more than Orpheus loved Eurydice or identify Orpheus’ weaker love as the cause of his unmanliness, the contrast between the two heroes undermines his apparent praise of Eros as the source of Alcestis’ virtue. Contrary to his earlier claim, Phaedrus now says that there are natures that are so defective that even Eros is unable to inspire to virtuous or manly action.

While the comparison between Alcestis and Orpheus brings the power of Eros into question, it is the contrast between Alcestis and Achilles⁴⁸⁹ that removes all doubt about the limitations of this god. Unlike Alcestis or Orpheus, Phaedrus says, Achilles is not the lover of Patroclus as Aeschylus claims, being the younger and the more beautiful of the two (180a). Despite his foreknowledge of his own doomed fate should he kill Hector, Achilles nevertheless chose to avenge his deceased lover. Because “a lover is a more divine thing than a beloved, for he has the god within him” (180b), Phaedrus says, the gods honoured Achilles the uninspired beloved more than the inspired Alcestis for the same sacrifice of life and sent Achilles to the “Isles of the Blest” (ibid). In other words, Phaedrus claims that “the gods themselves bear witness to the fact that virtue which is not god-inspired is higher than the virtue which is god-inspired.”⁴⁹⁰ It can be rewarding to act virtuously (or manly) as a lover, but the beloved who is not inspired by Eros receives

⁴⁸⁷ *Symposium* 179d.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 179d-e.

⁴⁸⁹ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 38. As Nichols notes, “Phaedrus’ example of Achilles...does not fit his previous pattern.”

⁴⁹⁰ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 53.

greater rewards for virtuous deeds. In other words, Phaedrus ranks the “unerotic” beloved who is capable of manly action above both the manly and the unmanly lovers in his “praise” of Eros. By ranking the son of an Argonaut above the Argonauts who are older,⁴⁹¹ moreover, Phaedrus also contradicts his earlier suggestion about the superiority of older beings. According to Phaedrus’ speech, Eros is an ancient and mortal being that can augment one’s sense of honour and shame, leading some to virtuous or manly actions that are sometimes rewarding, but it is better to be a beloved who can act in rewarding ways without the god’s inspiration.

C. Phaedrus’ praise of manliness

Indeed, Phaedrus advances a conception of the noble that is different from the courageous or noble actions that he explicitly praises. For much of his speech, Phaedrus pretends to praise Eros for its ability to augment one’s sense of honour and shame. Because of Eros’ power, Phaedrus says, both the lovers and their beloveds are much more susceptible to feelings of shame for shameful things and are more likely to do noble deeds. Phaedrus fails to clarify, however, whether both the lover and his beloved will feel shame for doing and suffering the same things. According to Phaedrus’ demonstration, it is only the lovers who are inspired by Eros to sacrifice their lives for their beloveds. When Achilles the uninspired beloved chooses to sacrifice his life and “to die after him who had died,” he does not do so that his lover could live.⁴⁹² Unlike Alcestis who dies in the place of her husband or Orpheus who descends into Hades to revive his beloved wife, Achilles does not take vengeance on Hector—knowing that he would die for this act—so

⁴⁹¹ Peleus, the father of Achilles, along with both Admetus and Orpheus, were all Argonauts who sailed with Jason to acquire the Golden Fleece. See Apollodorus Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1. 23, 49, 94. The Argonauts are one generation older than the Homeric heroes.

⁴⁹² *Symposium* 180a.

Patroclus could be saved or revived. Whereas the lovers die to benefit their beloveds, the beloved dies for his own benefit. Nothing in Phaedrus' speech suggests that the uninspired beloved would feel shame for abandoning their lovers on the battlefield or failing to die in their place. Moreover, Phaedrus is not dying for anyone by praising the uninspired beloved who died as Achilles did. Phaedrus praises Achilles' uninspired actions because it agrees with his own "unerotic" pursuits as a beloved, but it is questionable if Phaedrus would ever imitate Achilles and willingly die for anyone, for whatever reason. As someone who is not affected by Eros to feel shame for doing the things that the lovers are ashamed of, Phaedrus the "unerotic" beloved is free to act as he sees fit. In other words, Phaedrus understands Achilles' heroic sacrifice of life and everything else that the beloveds do in terms of personal gain.⁴⁹³ When he ironically praises the lovers' sacrifices for their beloveds in the name of manly virtue, Phaedrus in truth advances (and praises) the "manliness" of the clever rhetorician who dares to advance some egotistic morality under false pretenses. Beneath his apparent praise of Eros as something that could motivate noble or courageous actions, Phaedrus in truth praises the "unerotic" rhetorician who can deceive his audience with clever words. As such, the gullible beloved who could not unveil Lysias' deception in the *Phaedrus*⁴⁹⁴ had become a deceptive speaker himself. Unlike his beloved Lysias who conceals the praise of the "unerotic" beloved by praising the non-lover, however, Phaedrus the beloved praises the same "unerotic" way of life by pretending to praise Eros and the inspired lovers. And unlike Lysias who conceals his reliance on the myths in his demonstration of the superiority of the non-lover to the lover, Phaedrus simply modifies and arranges the

⁴⁹³ Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 56.

⁴⁹⁴ *Phaedrus* 264c.

myths to suit his needs. In short, Phaedrus' deceptive praise of the uninspired beloveds builds upon Lysias' approachable art of rhetoric which exemplifies the noblest or manliest pursuit in life for these individuals.⁴⁹⁵

By placing Phaedrus' deceptive speech at the beginning of the speech contest where all are supposed to praise Eros, Plato commences with a vulgar⁴⁹⁶ but clever kind of rhetoric that tacitly censures Eros and the lovers. For Phaedrus and Lysias, his teacher of rhetoric, the lovers who are inspired to sacrifice themselves for their beloveds are mad or foolish, and it is best to remain unaffected by love if one wishes to get the better of others. As Socrates shows in the palinode in the *Phaedrus*, however, the "unerotic" pursuit of gain is itself the result of a kind of eroticism or erotic affection of the human soul. At bottom, both the moral and practical basis of rhetoric as such are derived from the opinions of the multitude, and the soul that obeys these principles is presented in Socrates' palinode as one that is ruled by the black horse of the soul-chariot, "the friend of insolence and pride."⁴⁹⁷ Since there is no report of a discussion of Phaedrus' speech in the *Symposium*, one can only speculate about the effects that this speech would have had on Eryximachus (Phaedrus' lover) and Agathon (Pausanias' beloved).⁴⁹⁸ And to the extent that none of the subsequent speeches explicitly champion the "unerotic" way of life of the rhetorician, it is safe to say that Phaedrus had failed to persuade anyone at Agathon's party as he himself was persuaded by Lysias. Though some of them might agree with the egotistic morality that Phaedrus advances or the deceptive strategy of his

⁴⁹⁵ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 53.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 243c. As Strauss notes, Phaedrus' speech is "the lowest of all the speeches". See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 53. However, this study places the *Phaedrus* before the *Symposium* to highlight his unmitigated interest in Lysias' rhetoric.

⁴⁹⁷ *Phaedrus* 253e.

⁴⁹⁸ As Nichols notes, "one wonders what Phaedrus' lover Eryximachus hears in his speech." Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 39.

speech, these older men are unsuited for the beloved's way of life. Unlike the young (and beautiful) beloveds, the older (and less beautiful) lovers cannot rely on physical beauty in their erotic pursuits; they must have something else to offer.⁴⁹⁹ At the same time, it is not necessary that the relation (or organization) between the various speeches from Phaedrus to Socrates is one of ascension, in terms of either moral soundness or rhetorical power. It is possible that the most attractive or powerful speeches transmit the lowest or most harmful teachings, and vice versa.⁵⁰⁰

III. Pausanias' speech

Pausanias' speech is an elaborate justification of "noble" pederasty.⁵⁰¹ Through a two-fold division of both Aphrodite and Eros, Pausanias elevates and sanctifies his own erotic pursuits in the name of Uranian Aphrodite. As the co-worker of this heavenly goddess,⁵⁰² the Uranian Eros which Pausanias praises also leads to the lover's sexual gratification,⁵⁰³ but it is somehow nobler than the Pandemian kind of Eros that accompanies the Pandemian kind of Aphrodite. Every action, Pausanias asserts, is "neither noble or base...in itself," for "only in terms of how it is done in the doing of it

⁴⁹⁹ Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 466-468; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 73-74.

⁵⁰⁰ Of course, the power and goodness of each of the speeches is relative to the soul of the audience who examines them. See *Phaedrus* 271c-272b.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. *Symposium* 210a-212a. Diotima's teachings about "the correct practice of pederasty" (211b) is a criticism of Pausanias' praise of the noble or heavenly kind of pederasty. In other words, it is incorrect to assimilate the two speeches that praise the "divine" kind of Eros. Most importantly, Diotima's "correct pederasty" is not rooted in some conventional or institutional understanding of the noble. From the point of view of Socratic philosophy, only the good is correct or noble. Cf. John F. Miller, "The Esoteric Unity of Plato's Symposium," *Aperion* 12, no. 2 (1978): 20.

⁵⁰² Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff translate "Uranian" as "Heavenly" and "Pandemian" as "Pandemos" or "Common." See Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 13.

⁵⁰³ Kenneth J. Dover, "Eros and Nomos: (Plato, *Symposium* 182a-185c)," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, no. 11 (1964): 33-34. As Dover notes in his longer commentary on the *Symposium*, "it is not true that one cannot desire and enjoy sexual intercourse without being in love, but Pausanias is exploiting the notion that Eros is an agent inseparable from Aphrodite and always at her service." Kenneth J. Dover, ed., *Plato, Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 96. Thus it is wrong, as Grube does, to detect in Pausanias' speech a sincere criticism of the "purely physical infatuation" of the pandemian lover (97). See Grube, *Plato's Thought*, 97-98.

does it turn out to be the sort of thing that it is.”⁵⁰⁴ For Pausanias, actions cannot be said to be noble or base without referring to some established customs or institutions that dictate what the noble and the base are. Conveniently, the noble kind of pederasty that Pausanias praises at an Athenian gathering just happens to resemble the institution of Athenian pederasty.⁵⁰⁵ However, in addition to praising this complicated Athenian institution as superior to the simple institutions of the barbarians and the other Greeks, Pausanias also advocates—in the name of Athenian greatness—greater license for the lovers and less choices for the beloveds.⁵⁰⁶ According to Pausanias’ “descriptive-normative” account of Athenian pederasty, the lovers ought to be allowed to do just about everything to attain the beloveds’ sexual favours, while the beloveds should only be allowed to gratify their lovers for the sake of virtue. By promoting this “nobler” kind of Eros which restricts the commodities that the beloved could exchange with their sexual favours, Pausanias increases his chances of success as a lover when competing against the lovers who can offer money or political power but not virtue.⁵⁰⁷ At the same time, the moral worth of the virtues which Pausanias purports to teach is highly questionable if they are of equivalent worth to the gratification of sexual desires.⁵⁰⁸

A. The organization of Pausanias’ speech

⁵⁰⁴ *Symposium* 180e-181a.

⁵⁰⁵ For a helpful “literary” discussion of the truthfulness of Pausanias’ characterization of the institution of Athenian pederasty, see Kenneth Dover, “Eros and Nomos,” 31-42.

⁵⁰⁶ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 68. As Strauss notes: “Pausanias’ speech is characterized by the attempt to look at eros from the point of view of moral virtue. But this is not the speech of an entirely disinterested man. It is the speech of a man who wants freedom for his practices...His whole speech is, under the guise of a praise of the Athenian nomos, a suggestion of how to improve the Athenian nomos.”

⁵⁰⁷ Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 80-83; and Stanley Rosen, “The Nonlover in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” in *The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry: Studies in Ancient Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 89.

⁵⁰⁸ Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 466; Harry Neumann, “On the Sophistry of Plato’s Pausanias,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 95 (1964): 261-267; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 43; Arlene Saxonhouse, “Eros and the Female in Greek Political Thought: An Interpretation of Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (1984): 15.

In contrast to Phaedrus' wayward speech, Pausanias' praise of Eros is much more coherently organized. Following the two-fold division of Eros at the beginning of his speech, Pausanias systematically praises the kind of Eros that accompanies Uranian Aphrodite by contrasting it to the Pandemian kind of Eros and the non-Athenian institutions of pederasty. Indeed, the bulk of Pausanias' account of Uranian Eros consists of an interpretation of Athenian pederasty, which is said to be more complicated and "much finer"⁵⁰⁹ than the institutions or laws that exist in the other places. By organizing his speech in this coherent manner, Pausanias methodically demonstrates the respectability of his version of pederasty (or Uranian Eros) as something that encourages the pursuit of virtue in the beloveds. Over the course of his speech, Pausanias defends and elevates a contentious institution in Athens by means of a series of nominal differentiations between the Uranian and the Pandemian and the Athenian and the non-Athenian, which could appeal to a high-minded and patriotic audience if they fail to recognize Pausanias' selfish motivations as a lover who allegedly teaches virtue. Instead of concealing the action of his speech by means of contradiction, Pausanias, unlike Phaedrus, legitimizes and advances his personal interests by embedding his own pursuits as a lover within a favourable interpretation of an Athenian institution.

B. Pausanias' praise of Uranian Eros

To praise Eros, Pausanias the older lover must first clear himself from the suspicion or controversy that surrounds pederasty.⁵¹⁰ To disprove those who "have the nerve to say that it is shameful to gratify lovers," Pausanias must differentiate himself

⁵⁰⁹ *Symposium* 182d.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1416a.

and his pursuits as a lover from “those who have made pederasty a disgrace.”⁵¹¹ He accomplishes this by refuting the preceding speakers who all praise Eros as one being.⁵¹² It is not fine to praise Eros “in so unqualified a fashion,” Pausanias says, because “he is not one.”⁵¹³ Since there are two Aphrodites, and there is “no Aphrodite without Eros...it is necessary that there be two Erotes as well” (180d). Regardless of what one might think of his claim that there is no sex without the accompaniment of love, Pausanias tacitly reveals an interesting facet of his conception of Eros. By identifying the two Erotes as the co-workers of the two Aphrodites, Pausanias restricts Eros to the pursuit of sexual gratification.⁵¹⁴ In contrast to the inspired lovers who are characterized by their sacrifice of life in Phaedrus’ speech, both kinds of lovers in Pausanias’ speech are characterized by their aphrodisiac pursuits.⁵¹⁵ All lovers, Pausanias says, pursue sex, but the nobler manner of his pursuit as an Uranian lover makes his pursuit of sex nobler than the lovers who are inspired by the Pandemian goddess.

As it turns out, “the Eros that belongs to Aphrodite Pandemus” is “the one whom good-for-nothing human beings have as their love.”⁵¹⁶ In addition to the pansexual nature of this god being “no less in love with women than with boys,” those “who are of the same sort as this Eros” are in love with the bodies of “the stupidest there can be, for they have an eye only to the act and are unconcerned with whether it is noble or not.”⁵¹⁷

⁵¹¹ *Symposium* 182a.

⁵¹² As Apollodorus says, Aristodemus mentions a few speeches after Phaedrus’ speech which he could not recall. See *Symposium* 180c.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ Cf. *Symposium* 203c-204a. Diotima identifies Eros as the “attendant and servant of Aphrodite.” However, Diotima’s Aphrodite is characterized by beauty *and* wisdom.

⁵¹⁵ As Dover notes, “the difference between good and bad ἔρωσ lies in the whole context of the ultimate physical act, not in the presence or absence of the act itself.” Dover, “Eros and Nomos,” 34.

⁵¹⁶ *Symposium* 181a-b.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 181b.

Already, one gets the sense that Pausanias is a fastidious lover who understands the quality of Eros in terms of the qualities of the beloved. Unlike the Pandemian lovers who act according to chance, Pausanias the Uranian lover is highly selective. The Eros of “Uranian Aphrodite,” as Pausanias says, partake “only of male,” and “is the elder and has no part in outrage” because lovers of this kind “do not love boys except when boys start having sense...when the beard first appears” (181c-d). Here, Pausanias promotes a law that prohibits the loving of young boys to highlight the fact that those who are inspired by Uranian Eros do not pursue premature beloveds. However, this law does not just protect the young boys against the lovers’ exploitation, it also prevents the lovers from wasting their high-minded efforts, “for it is not clear where the perfection of boys has its end with regard to the vice and virtue of both soul and body” (181e). The good, Pausanias says, “willingly lay down this law upon themselves,” but it is necessary to apply this sort of “compulsory prohibition to those pandemian lovers” (ibid). Since those who censure pederasty “say it is shameful with an eye to those pandemian lovers, observing their impropriety and injustice” (182a), the promulgation of such a prohibitive law against the disorderly pursuits of these lovers, Pausanias suggests, would help to clear the controversy that surrounds pederasty and allow one to see it for what it is. Pausanias differentiates himself from the child molesters whom he also censures,⁵¹⁸ but his additional qualification about the prohibitive law against the loving of young boys—as something that protects the lovers from fruitless endeavours—makes it difficult to identify the true motivations of his proposal.

⁵¹⁸ Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 465.

After the differentiation between the Uranian and the Pandemian kinds of Eros, Pausanias explicitly identifies Uranian Eros with Athenian pederasty. The nominal differentiation between the two kinds of love and the explicit prohibition against child molestation do not satisfactorily establish the legitimacy of Pausanias' own pursuits as a lover. He must embed his pursuits as a lover within the Athenian institution of pederasty, as "any action whatsoever that is done in an orderly and lawful way would not justly bring reproach" (182a). Before offering his account of Athenian pederasty, however, Pausanias vilifies the non-Athenian institutions as simple or crude. According to Pausanias' account, these simple non-Athenian institutions can be understood as an opposed pair. Whereas no one would say that pederasty is shameful in Elis or Boeotia because "the gratification of lovers has been unqualifiedly legalized as noble" in these places,⁵¹⁹ the Ionian cities who "live under barbarians" prohibit the practice as entirely shameful.⁵²⁰ The former gives free reign to both the lovers and the beloveds, Pausanias argues, because "they are not wise in speaking" and do not wish to have to "persuade the young by speech" (182b), whereas the latter prohibit "pederasty as well as philosophy and the love of gymnastics" due to the greed of the tyrannical rulers and the cowardice of the ruled (182b-d). The finer and more complicated institution in Athens, Pausanias seems to suggest, is legitimate and praiseworthy because it overcomes the limitations of these simple and opposed institutions.

Indeed, Pausanias' account of Athenian pederasty can be understood as a mixture of the simple and opposed institutions of these non-Athenians. Instead of viewing pederasty as completely noble or shameful as is the case in these other places, Pausanias

⁵¹⁹ *Symposium* 182b.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

says, the Athenians view pederasty as both noble and shameful. So long as he is successful in his pursuits, the Athenian lover is encouraged to engage in many marvelous acts, such as “making all sorts of supplications and beseechings in their requests, swearing oaths, sleeping at the doors of their beloved, and being willing to perform acts of slavishness that not one slave would” (183a). Moreover, because the Athenians hold the lovers in such high esteem, “if he swears and then departs from his oath, for him alone is there pardon from the gods—for they deny that an oath in sex is an oath” (183b). According to Pausanias, both “the gods and human beings have made every opportunity available to the lover” for pursuing his beloved in Athens (183c). As is the case in Elis and Boeotia, it is also “customarily held to be a very fine thing in this city both to love and for lovers to have friends” (ibid).

At the same time, Athenian fathers “set attendants in charge of the beloveds and prohibit them from conversing with their lovers” (ibid), and the Athenian beloveds are reproached by their “contemporaries and comrades” as if the gratification of lovers is the “most shameful” (183d). Unlike Elis or Boeotia where “no one, whether young or old” would say that the gratification of a lover is shameful (182b), the Athenians—akin to the Ionians—do restrict the beloved’s actions with shame. According to Pausanias, the reason behind the Athenians’ restrictions on the beloved’s gratification of his lover is to test the lovers and to have the beloveds gratify only those who love his soul. Only the steadfast (or Uranian) lovers of the beloved’s soul who would not take flight once “the bloom of the body fades,” Pausanias says, ought to be gratified (183e). Here, it would not be unreasonable to expect a comparative account of the actions of the different lovers and how the beloveds could identify the nobler lover. In place of such an account, however,

Pausanias inserts a list of things that would be shameful for the beloveds to do when lovers pursue them. According to Pausanias, it is shameful “to let oneself to get caught too quickly” and “to be caught by money and political power” (184a). Only for the sake of virtue, he says, “is it wholly noble to grant one’s favors” to a lover (185b). Rather than testing the lovers’ intentions, the beloveds are shamed for pursuing wealth or political power in their love affairs. The complicated institution of Athenian pederasty that is supposed to protect the beloveds against lovers of the body turns out to be an institution that prefers patient⁵²¹ lovers who would exchange virtue for sex. As such, Athenian pederasty is composed of modified Eleian or Boeotian pederasty for the lovers and modified Ionian pederasty for the beloveds. Whereas the lovers are given free rein in their pursuit of the beloved’s sexual favours, the beloveds can only gratify their lovers for the sake of virtue.⁵²² Since it is not shameful either for the lovers to break their oaths or for the beloveds to be deceived by lovers who turn out “to be bad and without virtue” (185b), the moral worth of the beloved’s participation in Athenian pederasty is entirely hinged on the purity of his intentions.⁵²³ The “love of the Uranian goddess...compels both the lover himself and the beloved—each in his own case—to exercise much concern for virtue” (185b-c), but Athenian pederasty—according to Pausanias—does not require that either of them is or will become truly virtuous.

C. The nobility of Uranian Eros

⁵²¹ As Strauss notes, “this long period tests the tenacity rather than the decency of the lover.” Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 81.

⁵²² Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 466. As Bloom notes: “if the prostitute accepts wisdom as his pay, he is a splendid fellow.”

⁵²³ Cf. Neumann, “Plato’s Pausanias,” 262.

By identifying Uranian Eros with the complicated institution of Athenian pederasty, Pausanias allows Eros to not only affect the lovers but also the beloveds. As a complicated institution that is composed of a combination of different laws for the different participants, Athenian pederasty encourages the lovers' pursuit of the beloveds' sexual favours but pressures the beloveds to forgo many pursuits. As such, Uranian Eros or Athenian pederasty is noble or praiseworthy because it forces the beloveds to pursue virtue instead of the other things. Upon close inspection, however, one sees that Pausanias' praise of Uranian Eros contains a theoretical gap. When Pausanias restricts the beloveds to the pursuit of wisdom and the other virtues, he leaves open the possibility of a kind of love that falls beyond the scope of his binary account of Eros—a kind of love that does not culminate in sexual gratification. Of course, he could maintain that the noble or Uranian beloveds do not have to love the "virtues" that they pursue, but that argument would create another difficulty for Pausanias. Without the motivation of love or desire, Pausanias' beloveds would be lukewarm about receiving his teachings or befriending him.⁵²⁴ It is questionable that his unerotic beloveds will befriend him even if the institution of Athenian pederasty prevents them from pursuing (or loving) wealth and political power. On the other hand, if Pausanias' beloveds are the true lovers of virtue, then it is questionable that they would prefer a teacher who would trade virtue for sex as if they are things of equivalent worth.⁵²⁵

Like Phaedrus' speech, Pausanias' praise of Uranian Eros also seems to rest on its contribution to mankind's attainment of virtue. At the same time, neither of them praises

⁵²⁴ Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 87

⁵²⁵ Cf. *Symposium* 218e-219a.

Eros because it contributes to their *own* attainment of virtue.⁵²⁶ While it is the lovers who are inspired by Eros to act virtuously in Phaedrus' speech, it is the beloveds who could attain virtue in Pausanias' account of Athenian pederasty. Both speakers praise Eros for its contribution to someone else's attainment of virtue, when the things that they themselves attain in their respective love affairs are quite distinct from this praiseworthy achievement. Moreover, Pausanias' restrictions on the beloved's pursuits can be understood as a response to Phaedrus' ironic praise of the lovers' virtuous sacrifices for their beloveds. In the name of the good Athenian laws, Pausanias liberates the lovers from the feelings of shame that Phaedrus attributes to the power of Eros and qualifies the favours that they must confer on the beloveds. According to Pausanias' account of Athenian pederasty, the lovers will not feel shame for violating their oaths or failing to die in the place of their beloveds. Rather, it is the beloveds who are to feel shame for failing to pursue virtue. Although the Uranian lovers are also compelled to "exercise much concern for virtue,"⁵²⁷ their virtuous actions or sacrifices do not have to take place before (or after) their attainment of the beloveds' favours.

In comparison to Phaedrus' concealed praise of "unerotic" gain in a speech that is supposed to praise Eros as a great god, Pausanias' praise of Eros is more straightforward. Because he conceptualizes the speechwriter's "unerotic" pursuit (or love) of gain in opposition to the lover's foolish sacrifices for the beloved, Phaedrus' is compelled to conceal his true beliefs and pursuits in his praise of Eros. Pausanias, on the other hand,

⁵²⁶ Cf. Hunter, *Plato's Symposium*, 51. According to Hunter, "the principal difference between the accounts of Phaedrus and Pausanias lies in the explicitly didactic role of the *erastês* in the latter. Whereas in Phaedrus' speech, *erôs* will make someone behave 'rightly,' for Pausanias *erôs* is a force which makes not its object, but its object's beloved wiser and better."

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 185c.

has a much easier time praising Eros because his pursuit of the beloved's favours can be identified with the established institution of Athenian pederasty. Instead of concealing the pursuits that he praises by means of ambiguity or contradiction,⁵²⁸ Pausanias exonerates his contentious pursuits as a lover by differentiating them from the practices of the Pandemian lovers and the non-Athenians. Despite the sameness of the "ultimate physical act,"⁵²⁹ Pausanias' nominal differentiation between the Uranian and the Pandemian—in addition to his identification of Uranian Eros with Athenian pederasty—supposedly legitimates the fact that the lovers are not accountable for anything to anyone according to his speech. By means of a chauvinistic interpretation of Athenian pederasty, Pausanias panders to a niche group of patriotic elites⁵³⁰ who may also benefit from the deregulation of the lover's pursuits. Moreover, it is not evident that Pausanias identifies his pursuit of the beloved's favours as a lover with some extralegal conception of the noble. In other words, Pausanias' selfish interpretation of Athenian pederasty does not seem to have on a sophisticated account of human nature. He does not offer a naturalistic account of the lover's pursuit of sexual gratification or support his interpretation of the Athenian laws with some account of natural law. Like Phaedrus' praise of the beloveds' "unerotic" pursuit of gain, Pausanias' praise of the lover's pursuit of the beloved's sexual favours is rooted in convention or established opinion.⁵³¹ It just happens that these speakers find themselves in opposite roles in relation to the same institution of pederasty and are compelled justify different pursuits. Despite their apparent praise of Eros as something

⁵²⁸ See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 48.

⁵²⁹ Dover, "Eros and Nomos," 34.

⁵³⁰ Pausanias' explicit criticism of Pandemian or Common Eros sufficiently demonstrates his elite preferences. See Dover, "Eros and Nomos," 31, 36-40.

⁵³¹ See Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 65; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 68, 74-75.

that contributes to mankind's attainment of virtue, none of them has a serious commitment to the attainment of virtue, nor have they engaged in serious reflections about the moral worth of their own pursuits within the confines of this institution. It is the next pair of speakers who will break with convention and base their speeches about Eros on some account of nature or human nature.⁵³²

Indeed, Pausanias' obscene praise of Athenian pederasty has the pernicious effect of blending pederasty and philosophy, which are not clearly distinguished in his speech.⁵³³ In other words, his attempt to defend his version of Athenian pederasty can inadvertently slander philosophy in Athens. By displaying Pausanias' defense of pederasty in juxtaposition to the other speeches about Eros, including Socrates' praise of the philosopher's love of wisdom, however, Plato allows his audience to compare the different kinds of erotic pursuits for themselves, that is, to use the philosopher's art of thinking to distinguish the natures of Pausanias' pederasty and the other erotic pursuits, including Socrates' philosophy. After all, Plato cannot praise or defend philosophy if his audience does not know what philosophy is, and only when the audience of Plato's philosophical writings are able to think like the philosophers can he succeed in distinguishing Socrates' philosophy from Pausanias' pederasty.

IV. Eryximachus' speech

Aristophanes is supposed to speak after Pausanias, but for some reason, he had developed hiccups during or after Pausanias' speech and was unable to speak right away. He calls on Eryximachus the Asclepiad for help, both to get rid of his hiccups and to speak in his place. In the light of the things that Aristophanes eventually says in his

⁵³² Saxonhouse, "Eros and the Female," 15-16.

⁵³³ *Symposium* 183a.

speech, one could understand his hiccups as a bodily reaction to the high-mindedness of his predecessor's apparent censure of Pandemian Eros and its lack of concern for virtue. It is difficult for Aristophanes to speak after Pausanias because Aristophanes does not depict Eros as such a lofty thing.⁵³⁴ As a mediation between Pausanias' high-minded praise of Eros as a noble Athenian institution and Aristophanes' down-to-earth depiction of *erōs* as the symptom of the debilitating afflictions of human nature, Eryximachus' speech exemplifies the "erotic" arts of the Asclepiads which he praises. After his urbane adoption of Pausanias' division of Eros—an important part of the "body" of Pausanias' speech—Eryximachus transfigures it into a division of the opposed desires of the bodily entities of the cosmos that can be "virtuously" managed by the Asclepiads for the creation of harmony or friendship. By means of his intervention, Eryximachus removes the lovers' concern for virtue and instills the pursuit of health or harmony in its place.⁵³⁵ In other words, by practicing an art of speech that resembles his art of medicine, Eryximachus moderates Pausanias' lofty praise of Uranian Eros and alleviates Aristophanes' difficulty of praising Eros in a way that is discordant with Pausanias' speech.⁵³⁶

A. The organization of Eryximachus' speech

Eryximachus begins his speech by adopting Pausanias' two-fold division of Eros.

Pausanias, Eryximachus says, "made a fine start to his speech but did not adequately

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 16. As Saxonhouse notes, Aristophanes does not talk of "moral virtue nor of noetic things."

⁵³⁵ Seth Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium* (Munich: Carl Friedrich von Siemns Stiftung, 1994), 41. As Benardete insightfully notes, both Pausanias and Eryximachus "attempt to conceal sexual pleasure under the veneer of the beautiful." Aristophanes' amoralistic praise of the lovers' embrace becomes less discordant after Eryximachus substitutes virtue with health.

⁵³⁶ Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 112. For discussions of the civic function of the symposium which can help to make sense of the politeness of the participants, see Kathleen M. Lynch, "More Thoughts on the Space of the Symposium," *British School at Athens Studies* 15 (2007): 243-249. See also Hunter, *Plato's Symposium*, 5-15.

complete it,” and that it is his task “to put a complete end to the argument.”⁵³⁷ Having transfigured Pausanias’ two-fold division of Eros into the double Eros that is said to exist in all the bodily beings of the cosmos, Eryximachus proceeds to describe the various experts’ manipulations of this double Eros in the various bodies. Just as “the art of medicine is...the expert knowledge of the erotics of the body in regard to repletion and evacuation,”⁵³⁸ the art of music “is expert knowledge of the erotics of harmony and rhythm” (187c). In addition to this theoretical element which allows the experts to discriminate “between the noble and base love” (186d), there is also a practical element in the various arts that alters, instills, or removes either kind of love in the various bodies.⁵³⁹ This practical or productive element of the various arts, Eryximachus claims, allows the experts “to make the things that are most at enmity in the body into friends and to make them love one another” (ibid), which apparently creates or preserves the noble kind of love in the various bodies.⁵⁴⁰ Having described the art of medicine in this bipartite manner regarding the double Eros within the human body, Eryximachus proceeds to describe the arts of music, astronomy, and divination in the same way.⁵⁴¹ Over time, the bodies that these medicine-like arts are said to grasp become greater in scale and Eryximachus’ description of the various arts becomes less detailed.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁷ *Symposium* 185e.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 186c.

⁵³⁹ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 99.

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Jerry Green, “Melody and Rhythm at Plato’s *Symposium* 187d2,” *Classical Philology*, Vol. 110, no. 2 (2015): 155. Green misattributes the power of the expert to Eros. For interpretations that are like my own, see Benardete, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 45; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 45.

⁵⁴¹ Paul Friedländer identifies Empedocles as the source of Eryximachus’ dualism. See Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, 16-17. See also Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 108. Cf. *Phaedrus* 237d-238c.

⁵⁴² For a detailed discussion of the philosophers’ criticism of the disproportionate scale of Eryximachus’ competencies, see Susan B. Levin, “Eryximachus’ Tale: The *Symposium*’s Challenge to Medicine’s Preeminence,” in *Plato’s Rivalry with Medicine: A Struggle and Its Dissolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 73-109. See also Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 109-110.

As such, Eryximachus organizes his speech by repeating the same descriptive pattern about each of the arts as they are used to diagnose and manipulate the double Eros that is said to exist in the various bodies of the cosmos. In addition to advocating the Asclepiads' "materialist"⁵⁴³ understanding of bodily health by identifying the same "materialist" understanding of the cosmic bodies in the other arts, the gradual augmentation of the size of the bodies that are understood and controlled by the arts also provides Eryximachus the opportunity to embellish the experts with the virtues. The astronomers' understanding of the "erotic things in regard to the revolutions of stars and seasons of the years,"⁵⁴⁴ Eryximachus says, allows him to produce "seasonableness and health to human beings and to the rest of the animals and plants and commit no injustice,"⁵⁴⁵ while the diviners' understanding of "sacred law and piety" allows him to "gratify the decent Eros" in a pious way (188b-c). By identifying these far-reaching and beneficial (or virtuous) arts with his art of medicine in this incremental way,⁵⁴⁶ Eryximachus amplifies the capabilities and the moral worth of his humble profession.⁵⁴⁷ Indeed, it would be difficult to venerate the physician with the same virtues as he makes use of "the expert knowledge of the erotics of the body in regard to repletion and evacuation."⁵⁴⁸ In short, the repetitive and augmenting organization of Eryximachus'

⁵⁴³ See Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 473.

⁵⁴⁴ *Symposium* 188b.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ See *Phaedrus* 262a.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. Ludwig Edelstein, "The Role of Eryximachus in Plato's *Symposium*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 76 (1945): 85-103. Though I agree with Edelstein's observation that Eryximachus is a respected and important character, I disagree with his argument that Eryximachus embodies "the essential characteristics of the good doctor" (101). In the passage of the *Laws* which Edelstein cites, the Athenian Stranger speaks of two kinds of doctors. The slavish kind works with opinions and commands his slave-patients like some tyrant while the free kind investigates diseases "from their beginning and according to nature" and persuade his patients with speech (720b-e). Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 107. The free kind of doctor reminds of the artful or dialectical doctor Socrates mentions in the *Phaedrus*. See *Phaedrus* 270c-e.

⁵⁴⁸ *Symposium* 186c.

speech allows him to identify his art of medicine with the more extravagant arts that seem to depend on the same understanding of the double Eros that is supposed to exist in all bodies.

B. Eryximachus' conception of Eros

Compared to the preceding speakers, Eryximachus is vague about what he means by Eros or love. Though Eryximachus adopts Pausanias' two-fold division of Eros, he does not differentiate or clarify the two kinds of Eros through comparison. Instead, Eryximachus names the two Erotes according to the healthiness of the bodily beings, for "there is one love that presides over the healthy state, and another over the sickly."⁵⁴⁹ According to Eryximachus, the love that exists in healthy bodies is healthy or noble, whereas the love that exists in sick bodies is sick or base.⁵⁵⁰ As such, Eryximachus transforms his predecessor's division between the Pandemian lover of the body and the Uranian lover of the soul. Instead of the motion (or state of being) *toward* these different objects of desire, the double Eros is said to exist *within* "the bodies of all the animals as well as those things that grow in the earth, and just about all the things that are" (186a). Since all existence is bodily, the noble or Uranian love of the discarnate soul is left behind. Despite his brief mention of the love that presides "over the souls of human beings in regard to the beautiful" (ibid), the double Eros of Eryximachus' speech has nothing to do with souls.⁵⁵¹

Like the physicians, the other professionals whom Eryximachus lists in his speech also allegedly understand the double Eros that exists within the various bodies and can

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 186b.

⁵⁵⁰ See Thomas Gould, *Platonic Love* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 29; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 98.

⁵⁵¹ Cf. Green, "Melody and Rhythm," 156.

induce changes in them “so as to bring about the acquisition of one kind of love in place of the other...to instill it, or to remove it from those things in which it is [but should not be].”⁵⁵² By gratifying “the good and healthy things of each body,”⁵⁵³ these physician-like professionals collaboratively produce the same kind of decent Eros that is said to possess “the greatest power and provides us with every kind of happiness, making us able to associate with one another and to be friends even with the gods who are stronger than we are” (188d). In other words, the double Eros that is said to exist within the various bodies is not so much a psychological experience (or state of being) as the product of “scientific” control or the lack thereof. Indeed, when he explicates the physicians’ manipulation of the human body for the creation of the healthy Eros, Eryximachus describes it as an attempt “to make the things that are most at enmity in the body into friends and make them love one another” (186d). To foster the healthy kind of Eros in the human body, the physicians will manage the opposite things that “are the most at enmity: cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and moist, and anything of the sort” (186d-e). And according to his subsequent depiction of the art of music and the musicians’ manipulations of pitch and beat,⁵⁵⁴ the expert management of the various “bodies” is nothing but the elimination of opposite and difference things. Because “it is impossible to derive agreement from differing things as long as they are differing; and it is impossible, in turn, to fit together the differing or nonagreeing” (187b), the experts will create harmonies or friendships within the various bodies by eliminating the differences and oppositions that exist in them by means of “moderate harmony and mixture” (188a).

⁵⁵² *Symposium* 186d.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 186c.

⁵⁵⁴ See Green, “Melody and Rhythm,” 153-154.

Since it is difference or opposition that is said to bring about enmity or strife, the elimination of these alleged causes of conflict is what allows love as harmony to take place within the various bodies, and it is harmony as such that leads to bodily health.⁵⁵⁵ Put differently, a body that does not contain within it the differences or oppositions that could lead to enmity or strife is said to be healthy, and such a healthy body will naturally pursue the healthy or noble kind of Eros.⁵⁵⁶ Just as the musician will eliminate the “differences between the high and the low” by “means of the art of music,”⁵⁵⁷ the astronomer will use astronomy or the science of the “erotic things in regard to the revolution of stars and seasons of the years”⁵⁵⁸ to harmonize or mix “the hot and the cold, and the dry and the moist” (188a). By harmonizing the various bodies in this manner, these physician-like experts produce bodily health and forestall the harmful or shameful pursuits of the unhealthy bodies. Though he does not describe the bodies of the gods or the opposites that can be found within them, it is nonetheless inferable from Eryximachus’ speech that the physician-like diviner also understands and practices his art in the same way. Through the “overseeing and healing” (188c-d) of the double Eros in the bodies of the gods, the diviner will “improve the gods by appeasing them.”⁵⁵⁹

As Eryximachus does not provide any detailed descriptions of the experts’ manipulations of the various bodies to produce friendship and health, much of one’s interpretation is left to the imagination. But the basic idea of Eryximachus’ speech is

⁵⁵⁵ See Saxonhouse, “Eros and the Female,” 16.

⁵⁵⁶ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 98. As Strauss correctly notes, “the healthy body loves X, and the sick body loves Y.” Cf. Clay, “Tragic and Comic Poet,” 247. Contrary to Clay’s observation, Eryximachus’ art does not directly “encourage the love of the fair and deny the love or lust for what is base and ugly.” Instead, it fosters health of the body, which then loves or desires things or actions that are noble insofar as they do not lead to sickness.

⁵⁵⁷ *Symposium* 187b.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 188b.

⁵⁵⁹ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 109.

sufficiently clear: to possess health and to live in a healthy environment, you need Eryximachus and his peers to create harmony or the mutual love of identical things in the various bodies. At the same time, however, Eryximachus seems to suggest that the practitioners of the various arts would not have to eradicate the unhealthy or shameful kind of Eros.⁵⁶⁰ When Eryximachus describes the art of music in relation to education, for instance, he recommends the cautious application of the “pandemian” kind of Eros which belongs to “Polyhymnia,” so one “might harvest its own pleasure but not instill any intemperance.”⁵⁶¹ Likewise, the physicians, Eryximachus says, will also “employ in a fair way the desires that cluster around the art of making delicacies so as to harvest their pleasure without illness.”⁵⁶² If “it is shameful to gratify the bad and sickly things” (186c), then why does Eryximachus allow the experts to “employ” Eros of this kind? Why do the physician-like experts permit their patients to love or pursue these shameful or sickly things?

To understand Eryximachus’ permissiveness, one must take a step back and re-examine his conception of health and its relationship to the double Eros. Put simply, Eryximachus’ conception of health—to the extent that it is created by the elimination of enmity or strife in the body—is characterized by the lack of destruction. For Eryximachus, a healthy body is one that is *preserved* by means of art. Indeed, this “implies that by nature there are only sick bodies”⁵⁶³ where the sick or shameful kind of Eros, a product of the internal strife between the dissimilar and opposite things within, naturally leads them toward death or destruction. Since the goal of the various arts is to maintain the durability

⁵⁶⁰ See Anderson, *The Masks of Dionysos*, 37; Hunter, *Plato’s Symposium*, 58.

⁵⁶¹ *Symposium*, 187e.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 103.

of the various bodies, Eryximachus does not have to restrict the appetites of his patients so long as their bodies can continue to endure. Since health (or sickness) is not caused by the healthy (or sick) Eros but the other way around, and neither kind of Eros has a specific set of objects of pursuit, Eryximachus does not have to prohibit the pursuits or activities which could be identified with sickness or shame. As such, Eryximachus extricates the experts from the duty of dictating the patients' loves or desires. The base pursuits of the sick body, Eryximachus seems to suggest, do not destroy the body so long as you have a physician's help.⁵⁶⁴ What Eryximachus promises in the name of art, therefore, is the possibility of enduring life and the attainment of its various kinds of pleasures. Indeed, Eryximachus offers "a set of theoretical sciences which would guide our exploitation of nature and tell us how much we could get away with our tinkering."⁵⁶⁵

As Mary Nichols correctly notes, "it is no accident that Eryximachus' beloved is concerned with his health."⁵⁶⁶ When Socrates meets Phaedrus at the beginning of the eponymous dialogue, he is acting on the recommendation of Eryximachus' father to walk on the smooth and easy path along the city walls—an easygoing pursuit of health that does not require the patients to toil or suffer.⁵⁶⁷ Like his father, Eryximachus also practices an unobtrusive art of medicine which promotes health only when it is opportune—that is, when the medical recommendations do not hinder the pursuit of pleasure or seem strenuous.⁵⁶⁸ So long as his patients do not harm their bodies beyond repair, Eryximachus

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. *Gorgias* 464b-465d. For Socrates, the pursuit of true health through exercise and medication is necessarily toilsome.

⁵⁶⁵ Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 45.

⁵⁶⁶ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 47

⁵⁶⁷ *Phaedrus* 227a.

⁵⁶⁸ See Levin, "Eryximachus' Tale," 96. As Levin notes, "Eryximachus' account here powerfully illustrates Plato's view that nothing internal to medicine that can impose the requisite limits on desire and pleasure." In the *Phaedrus*, however, Socrates does speculate about a more dialectical kind of medicine. Cf. *Phaedrus* 268a-c, 269e-270d.

has little to say about their indulgences. In short, Eryximachus removes the “beautiful cover”⁵⁶⁹ of Pausanias’ praise of the “noble” pursuit of bodily pleasure and replaces the authority of law with the authority of art or science. With Eryximachus, the gratification of bodily pleasure is not based on the lawful but the natural, understood in terms of the preservation and destruction of the bodily beings. Bodily health, defined as the durability of the body, replaces lawfulness as the standard of goodness, but the “healthy” lover of Eryximachus’ speech is not necessarily more restrained than Pausanias’ “Uranian” lover when it comes to the pursuit of bodily pleasures. Without the hindrance of convention, it is certainly easier for Eryximachus to legitimize his pleasurable pursuits and prescriptions.

C. Eryximachus’ praise of the “erotic” arts

Despite the prominent role that he plays initiating the contest of adorning Eros,⁵⁷⁰ “who is so great and important a god,”⁵⁷¹ Eros is not the focal point of Eryximachus’ eulogy.⁵⁷² Rather, Eryximachus praises the arts that are able to control the various “erotic things” that exist in the various bodies.⁵⁷³ According to his speech, it is “the arts that control the two loves, instilling and removing them, and being able to replace sickness with health, whether in the human body, in the seasons of the year, or in the relations between gods and human beings.”⁵⁷⁴ The healthy or noble kind of Eros of the healthy bodies is the product of the various arts that produce bodily health, which defined as the durability of the bodily beings, is the underlying conception of nobility of Eryximachus’

⁵⁶⁹ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 44.

⁵⁷⁰ Edelstein, “Eryximachus in Plato’s *Symposium*,” 95-96.

⁵⁷¹ *Symposium* 177a-b.

⁵⁷² Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 116.

⁵⁷³ *Symposium* 188b.

⁵⁷⁴ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 45.

speech. At the same time, the supervised pursuit of health also permits the pursuit of pleasure, and it is not clear which of the two takes priority.⁵⁷⁵ Judging by the habits of his beloved,⁵⁷⁶ those who subscribe to Eryximachus' expertise will likely pursue both at the same time. Eryximachus' "erotic" art is praiseworthy because it promises pleasurable and enduring life.

Like Pausanias, Eryximachus also speaks from the perspective of a lover. But unlike his predecessor, Eryximachus does not defend pederasty from an institutionalist perspective. Unlike Pausanias who legitimizes his controversial pursuits as a lover by means of chauvinism and legalism, Eryximachus justifies his pursuits as physician by identifying his profession with the more splendid professions that also allegedly operate on the natural bodies in the same way. To the extent that Eryximachus the lover does not bestow his "virtuous" expertise on his beloved in exchange for sex, his praise of art is not fully compatible with the kind of pederasty that Pausanias defends. Moreover, Eryximachus' praise of art does not necessitate the differentiation between the pursuits of the lover and the beloved. Instead of pursuing either pleasure *or* virtue, both the lover and the beloved will pursue the same thing: a pleasurable and enduring life. Put differently, Eryximachus transgresses the conventional roles that are assigned to the pederast and the beloved and removes the perfunctory concern for virtue. It is this transformation that facilitates Aristophanes' speech. However, it is unclear why the expert who can produce bodily health on his own "would be a lover at all."⁵⁷⁷ If pleasurable health is the expert's

⁵⁷⁵ See Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 45. Benardete argues that pleasure is the only good for Eryximachus. The arts create durable existence, which allow for the enduring pursuit of pleasure.

⁵⁷⁶ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 52.

⁵⁷⁷ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 46.

object of desire,⁵⁷⁸ then what role could the beloved play in the expert's pursuits? Does his beloved contribute to his pursuit of pleasure (or health) in some way, or is the beloved simply a loyal patient whose reliance on his expertise contributes to the durability of his profession?

At any rate, Eryximachus' expertise in the erotics of the body is remarkably different from Socrates' expertise of "erotics."⁵⁷⁹ In contradistinction to Eryximachus' expertise which seeks to produce health or durability through the manipulation of the "erotic things" within the body, Socrates' expertise of erotics is not itself unerotic or "supra-erotic." For Socrates, to be an expert of erotics is to recognize the beautiful things that one lacks and desires and the dialectical path that one must take to pursue them.⁵⁸⁰ As such, Socrates the lover of wisdom would question Eryximachus' assumption that pleasurable health is the highest good. As an expert of erotics, Socrates must examine the assertion that health as such could satisfy the philosopher's desire to live well, when living well clearly requires the virtues of the soul in addition to bodily health.⁵⁸¹ Indeed, in the light of his own speech in the *Symposium* which identifies immortality as the common desire of all mortal beings,⁵⁸² Socrates would also challenge the assumption that pleasurable health could even satisfy the souls of the non-philosophers.⁵⁸³ By displaying

⁵⁷⁸ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 98. Strauss argues that Eryximachus as an expert "does not feel love for that which he satisfies or for that which he does not satisfy." If the experts do not love the apparently good effects that they can produce through art, then why are they interested in producing them? In other words, it is not clear if Eryximachus sees himself as a patient of the double Eros, which could render his expertise more erotic than he would like.

⁵⁷⁹ See *Symposium* 177e, 201d.

⁵⁸⁰ See *Phaedrus* 249b-e; *Symposium* 209e-212a.

⁵⁸¹ See *Republic* 353d-354a.

⁵⁸² *Symposium* 208a.

⁵⁸³ It is taken for granted that Eryximachus and the other Asclepiads can deliver on their promises. I leave it to the medical experts to decide on the reliability of the different erotic arts for contemporary medical science.

Eryximachus' praise of art which he claims to have mastered Eros and all the bodily entities in the cosmos, Plato presents an alternative to Socrates' erotic art, which cannot be fully mastered because of the sheer difficulty of its goals.⁵⁸⁴ Yet it is Socrates' unquenched desire for wisdom that compels him to examine Eryximachus' praise of art, and it is Plato's display of these various speeches in juxtaposition that allows his audience to examine the various "erotic" arts for themselves as the philosophers would.

V. *Aristophanes' speech*

Having been cured of his hiccups, Aristophanes will now speak in Eryximachus' place as Eryximachus had spoken in his.⁵⁸⁵ Right away, the comic poet brings the reliability of his predecessor's speech into question. Reflecting on his recent struggles, Aristophanes questions "the orderly decency of the body desiring such noises and garglings as a sneeze is" (189a), challenging the idea that the healthy Eros of the healthy body is noble or decent.⁵⁸⁶ Instead of telling Aristophanes that hiccups are a sign of sickness, however, Eryximachus responds to Aristophanes' remarks by cautioning Aristophanes from making fun of his speech, "lest you ever say anything laughable—though you did have the chance to speak in peace" (189b). While Aristophanes is not

⁵⁸⁴ *Symposium* 210c-211b. The difficulty of seeing the highest truth is more vividly captured in Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus*. See *Phaedrus* 248a-b.

⁵⁸⁵ For a discussion of the effacement of Aristodemus in this "hiccupping episode," see Paul O'Mahoney, "On the 'Hiccupping Episode' in Plato's *Symposium*," *The Classical World* 104, no. 2 (2011): 143-159. According to O'Mahoney, all the symposiasts had failed to "lay hold of Eros" (152) as Aristodemus, who resembles Diotima's Eros, was skipped over. However, since Diotima clearly depicts Eros as a philosopher who loves and pursues wisdom, including wisdom or knowledge of the truth about *erōs*, it is unclear how "philosophy proves inadequate to the challenge of grasping *erōs*" (153), or how "it is equally true that *erōs* is not a precondition of or a satisfactory foundation for education to philosophy" (154). In other words, it does not make sense to differentiate Socrates and Diotima's Eros and in the same breath call Socrates a philosopher (who fails to understand *erōs*). According to Diotima's speech, it is possible to have daemons who are less erotic, but there are no unerotic philosophers. See *Symposium* 203b-204c.

⁵⁸⁶ See Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 48. According to Nichol's interpretation, Aristophanes' remark exposes the limitations of art. I agree to this observation to the extent that it implies that there are afflictions or defects of nature that cannot be fixed by art.

afraid “to say laughable things,” he nevertheless asks Eryximachus to relent and “let what has been said be as if it were never spoken” (ibid). Aristophanes, it seems, asks for truce. In the light of Aristophanes’ praise of Eros as a “cure” for the profound afflictions of human nature, however, his playful remarks about the decency of the desires of the healthy body turn out to be quite serious. Just like he had wished, Aristophanes makes a speech that creates laughter but is not itself laughable.⁵⁸⁷ As objects of poetic representation, the defects of human nature are as hilarious as they are morose.⁵⁸⁸

Instead of filling in the gaps of Eryximachus’ speech, Aristophanes says that he will speak “in a somewhat different vein from that which you and Pausanias spoke” (189c). By grouping his predecessors in this way, Aristophanes points to the shared division of Eros in their speeches and the undividedness of Eros according to his own speech. At the same time, Aristophanes conceals the remarkable dissimilarities between his predecessors’ speeches and the similarities between his speech and Eryximachus’ speech, that is, the reasons why he could speak after Eryximachus but not after Pausanias. Although he does not praise the “erotic” arts of the Asclepiads as Eryximachus does, Aristophanes’ conception of Eros is also premised on a corporeal understanding of human nature. Like Eryximachus’ speech, Aristophanes’ speech has nothing to do with souls.⁵⁸⁹ But unlike Eryximachus who divides Eros according to the health and sickness

⁵⁸⁷ For discussions of the tragic elements of Aristophanes’ speech, see Waller R. Newell, *Ruling Passion: the Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 74; Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 140.

⁵⁸⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a-1449a, 1453a. In contradistinction to the tragic hero, the defects of the comic hero do not cause ruin or arouse pity.

⁵⁸⁹ See Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 50; Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 137-8, 140. As Strauss notes, Eryximachus and Aristophanes are interchangeable because they share such an understanding of nature. See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 95, 120. Cf. Saxonhouse, “Eros and the Female,” 18. Saxonhouse argues that according to Aristophanes’ speech, death allows human beings to “become bodiless souls capable of enjoying a final and complete unity.” However, Aristophanes does not speak about the incorporeality of the dead lovers, only that they will be united through mutual embrace. See *Symposium*

of the body, Aristophanes identifies Eros with the profound division (and affliction) of human nature.⁵⁹⁰

Parodying some hierophant of the mysteries of Eros,⁵⁹¹ Aristophanes will let his audience in on the hitherto unknown truth about the god. According to his mythopoetic revelations, “love is the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole” (193a), and it is praiseworthy because the mutual embrace of lovers “is closest to...the best” (193c). By submitting to Eros—the symptom of the gods’ debilitating division of human nature—and acting piously toward the gods in their submission, Aristophanes says, human beings can avoid “the enmity of the gods” (193b) or further bodily disintegration.⁵⁹² Although it is questionable that anyone would wish to return to the grotesque state of the ancient humans, Aristophanes reveals, the “phantom pain”⁵⁹³ of love cannot be salved in any other way—even if the patient of love should seem perfectly healthy from a medical point of view.⁵⁹⁴ By identifying Eros with the desire and pursuit of completion, Aristophanes constricts Eros to the pursuit of the lovers’ mutual embrace, which is supposed to help sedate our feelings of wretchedness as incomplete creatures. Instead of being reminded by the beauty of one’s beloved of the beautiful things that one truly lacks and desires and the dialectical journey that one could take to pursue beauty as such,⁵⁹⁵ the lovers in

192e; cf. Aristophanes, *Frogs* 117-165. Like Phaedrus’ Orpheus, Aristophanes’ Dionysus in the *Frogs* also does not set his body loose when he descends into Hades.

⁵⁹⁰ See Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 136.

⁵⁹¹ See *Symposium* 189d. For a helpful discussion of the eclectic form of Aristophanes’ speech, see Kenneth J. Dover, “Aristophanes’ Speech in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 86 (1966): 41-50. As Dover notes, “comedy uses, adapts and parodies every genre of composition.” See also Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, 56-57; Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, 19. This initiatory form reappears in the speeches of Socrates and Alcibiades.

⁵⁹² Aristophanes also suggests that the lovers’ mutual embrace can lead to true restoration, but it is questionable that such a restoration is possible or desirable according to Aristophanes’ speech.

⁵⁹³ See Harry Neumann, “On the Comedy of Plato’s Aristophanes,” *The American Journal of Philology* 87, no. 4 (1966): 420, n. 2.

⁵⁹⁴ See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 134.

⁵⁹⁵ *Phaedrus* 250a-c, 251a-253c, 254b-256b; *Symposium* 202e-204c, 209e-212a.

Aristophanes' speech are reminded by the wrinkles around their navels of their own pathetic being and are led to believe that the lovers' mutual embrace is the best remedy for their afflictions.

A. The organization of Aristophanes' speech

To be initiated into the power of Eros, Aristophanes says, one must "first understand human nature and its afflictions" (189d). To facilitate his audience's understanding, Aristophanes produces a genealogical account of human nature which makes sense of the present and the future in the light of the past.⁵⁹⁶ In other words, Aristophanes' speech is organized in a chronological manner which allows his audience to experience and understand the phenomenon of love in its "historical"⁵⁹⁷ context. To appreciate the power and goodness of Aristophanes' Eros, one must bear witness to the transformative events that made human beings into characteristically erotic creatures.⁵⁹⁸

Once upon a time, Aristophanes says, there were three kinds of human beings rather than the two. All three kinds had spherical bodies and "two faces alike in all respects on a cylindrical neck...and four ears, and two sets of genitals" (190a). With their four arms and four legs, they could walk "in whatever direction," and whenever they had the "impulse to run fast, then just as tumblers with their legs straighten out actually move around as they tumble in a circle" (ibid). Like their parents—the sun, the earth, and the moon⁵⁹⁹—these ancient humans "were globular, as was their manner of walking" (190b). Because of their amazing mobility and strength, these globular human ancestors

⁵⁹⁶ See Hunter, *Plato's Symposium*, 63.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 62. As Hunter notes, "Aristophanes myth may be seen as a radical revision of the 'battles of Titans, Giants, and centaurs, the fictions of men of old'."

⁵⁹⁸ Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 140.

⁵⁹⁹ For helpful discussions of these cosmic or Uranian gods in relation to the rebelliousness of the globular human ancestors, see Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 139-142; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium* 124-127.

harboured “great and proud thoughts” (ibid) and set upon the Olympian gods and failed. After some deliberation, Zeus decided that the ancient humans should be cleft in twain to make them “weaker and more useful...through the increase in their numbers” (190d). With the help of Apollo’s leatherwork, these ancient humans lose their resemblance to the cosmic gods and are made to resemble the Olympian gods. Having lost their wholeness and their own halves, human beings began to embrace each other “in their desire to grow together” (191a) and Eros as “the desire and the pursuit of the whole” (193a) becomes the defining feature of the modern humans. To stop these modern humans from withering away due to the debilitating effects of the bifurcation,⁶⁰⁰ Zeus “took pity on them” and rearranged their genitals “toward the front” to facilitate human reproduction (191b).⁶⁰¹

Through his mythopoetic depiction of the genealogical origins of Eros—the dubious actions of both the ancient humans and the Olympian gods—Aristophanes offers a forceful account of the phenomenon of love and why human beings living in the present should lead an erotic way of life.⁶⁰² By displaying the grotesque bifurcation of the human body into halves, Aristophanes playfully⁶⁰³ captures one’s feelings of loss or incompleteness and couples it with the romantic belief that there is another human being out there who is “meant to be.”⁶⁰⁴ Because modern humans inherited the corporeal punishment for their predecessors’ injustice against the Olympian gods, human beings in the present both desire and ought to submit to the power of Eros “and meet with our own

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. *Phaedrus* 259b-c.

⁶⁰¹ Of course, the actions of Aristophanes’ Olympian gods are not philanthropic. See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 125.

⁶⁰² See Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, 19.

⁶⁰³ See Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 476.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 478.

favourites, which few at the moment do” (193b). Indeed, by identifying the debilitating metamorphoses of human nature with the haphazard interventions of the Olympian gods, Aristophanes can claim that it is not only natural to pursue one’s beloved in the present but also against divine law to act otherwise.⁶⁰⁵ Aristophanes legitimizes love as the pursuit of the completion of one’s bodily being by showing that it is unnatural and impious to disregard such a god-given urge. Though it is but an inverted imitation of mankind’s ancient *past*, with two faces looking at each other instead of opposite directions, it is our preoccupation with the lovers’ embrace in the *present* that hinders us from *future* ruin.⁶⁰⁶

B. Aristophanes’ conception of Eros

Like Eryximachus, Aristophanes’ conception of Eros is also based on a corporeal account of human nature.⁶⁰⁷ Instead of dividing Eros according to the health and sickness of the human body, however, Aristophanes identifies Eros with the common affliction of all modern humans. Depending on one’s genealogy, one is either a half of the double-male, the double-female, or the androgynous creature that is both male and female.⁶⁰⁸ Since Eros is the symptom of the same affliction that affects all modern humans regardless of one’s ancestry, all erotic pursuits of the whole are equally natural or legitimate, although only the embrace between a male and a female leads to procreation. According to Aristophanes, everyone is a lover by nature as it is everyone’s nature to

⁶⁰⁵ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 133-134.

⁶⁰⁶ The linear chronology of Aristophanes’ speech should be compared to Socrates’ circular account of the human soul in the palinode in the *Phaedrus*. It is debatable whose account of the human condition is more tragic (and more powerful), although both accounts reveal some unsurmountable challenge that we must confront as human beings.

⁶⁰⁷ Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 137-138.

⁶⁰⁸ Aristophanes’ myth cannot be understood literally. It is impossible to make sense of one’s sexual orientation in relation to the nature of these globular ancestors because the halves of both the double-male and the double-female would have to procreate with different halves.

respond to their affliction by pursuing one's "missing half." Ideally, when a lover embraces his beloved, his beloved accepts and returns the embrace as his lover. As such, the lover and the beloved do not play different roles in an erotic relationship; both the pursuer and the pursued desire the same thing and are expected to act in the same manner.⁶⁰⁹ Though special recognition is given to pederasty⁶¹⁰ at an all-male party with many pederasts, Aristophanes does not reproach the erotic affairs between members of the opposite sex as "Pandemian," nor does he praise Eros because it could lead to lovers' attainment of virtue.⁶¹¹

Moreover, Aristophanes' Eros is not so much a god as a creation of the gods.⁶¹² As the outcome of the gods' *ad hoc* transmogrification of human nature, Aristophanes' Eros combines the force of nature with divine intervention, but Eros as such is not a god or a divine being. According to Aristophanes, Eros is the outcome of a profound affliction of human nature that resulted from our ancestor's failed assault on the gods, which renders Eros into an essential element of both natural and divine law. Through this mythopoetic depiction of the origins and the consequences of Eros, Aristophanes both

⁶⁰⁹ See David M. Halperin, "Plato and Erotic Reciprocity," *Classical Antiquity* 5, no. 1 (1986): 67-8. As Halperin correctly notes of Socrates' speech: "both members of the relationship become active, desiring lovers; neither remains solely a passive object of desire" (68). This is also the case according to Aristophanes' speech, but the lovers in the two speeches desire remarkably different things.

⁶¹⁰ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 136-137. As Strauss notes, Aristophanes' praise of pederasty, like his praise of love, is rooted in a "rebellion against nomos" (137).

⁶¹¹ See *Symposium* 184d. According to Strauss' interpretation, pederasty or manliness is praiseworthy because "the community of those which are most manly by nature is most highly erotic to the deepest degree in regard to what eros is ultimately after—the state of completeness in which men could challenge the gods." Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 137. However, it is difficult to understand why Aristophanes would caricaturize the ancient humans if the completion of nature or the usurpation of the gods is the deepest desire of mankind.

⁶¹² See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 133. Although it makes sense to identify the bodies of the modern humans with the bodies of the Olympian gods, Aristophanes does not say that the Olympian gods are incomplete or erotic. Cf. *Phaedrus* 247a-e, 249c. In the palinode, Socrates seems to characterize the Olympian gods as beings that can easily access "those things the communion with which causes God to be divine" (249c). Likewise, Diotima claims that none of the gods philosophize because they are already wise. See *Symposium* 204a.

legitimizes the erotic pursuits of all human beings and exhorts his audience to bring “love to a consummate end” (193c). However, by identifying Eros with such a profound affliction of human nature, Aristophanes’ legitimization of the pursuit of the lovers’ embrace eclipses many other human pursuits that could be categorized as erotic. As Diotima says in Socrates’ recollected speech, “eros is the whole desire of good things and of being happy” (205d), and there are many lovers of happiness who do not pursue “their own halves...unless...that half or whole can be presumed to be really good” (205e). Indeed, Aristophanes does not offer any advice about the selection of one’s lover (or beloved). Even if one accepts Aristophanes’ claim that all human beings are lovers who desire to embrace their own half, it is still unclear whom one should pursue or accept. Because love is caused by the urgent need to remove one’s painful feelings of incompleteness, it seems that all lovers (or beloveds) are equally good so long as they are “to one’s taste” (193c), and whatever one does to one’s “partner” to make oneself feel complete is justified.⁶¹³ As some scholars have noted, the lovers in Aristophanes’ speech are devoid of speech and mind.⁶¹⁴ Characterized by the overwhelming debilitation of the body, the human lovers in Aristophanes’ speech are unable to examine the goodness of their erotic pursuits. They have no choice but to submit to the power of Eros.⁶¹⁵

C. Aristophanes’ praise of completion

Near the end of his speech, Aristophanes offers some advice to his audience about how best to live as the bifurcated descendants of the ancient or complete humans. There, he claims that the consummation of love constitutes a major step in one’s restoration, and

⁶¹³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 238e-241d.

⁶¹⁴ Benardete; *On Plato’s Symposium*, 55; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 51; Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 140-1.

⁶¹⁵ Cf. *Phaedrus* 250e-251a; *Symposium* 207a-208b.

that it is being restored to one's ancient nature that human beings are made "blessed and happy" (193d). However, it is not entirely clear that the true restoration of human nature is possible or desirable according to Aristophanes' speech. In addition to the question of the extra skin that Apollo was able to use to wrap around the front of the bifurcated humans,⁶¹⁶ the descendants of these bifurcated humans—unlike the generation that received the gods' punishment—do not possess a "missing half." Though they had inherited their ancestors' incompleteness, they can never be truly restored as there is no complete original to which they can return. As such, Eros as the desire and pursuit of the whole is as urgent as it is futile.⁶¹⁷ And in the light of the grotesque features of the ancient humans and their licentious manners according to Aristophanes' speech, it is questionable that he would encourage anyone to return to that original state. When Aristophanes' Hephaestus asks the lovers if they wish to be fused together, the other symposiasts must have been reminded of a similar scene in the *Odyssey*, where Hephaestus is said to have snared Aphrodite (his wife) and Ares in bed with his metalwork.⁶¹⁸ Though these divine lovers are "unified" under the net of Hephaestus, it is doubtful that they are comfortable or happy in their entanglement, which also casts doubt on the desirableness of Hephaestus' restoration of the human lovers in Aristophanes' speech. Despite Aristophanes' explicit claims about the goodness of the restoration or completion of human nature, his depictions of the ancient or complete humans are far

⁶¹⁶ Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 130.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶¹⁸ Homer, *Odyssey* 8.264-366. For extended discussions of the "net of Hephaestus" passage, see Arlene Saxonhouse, "The Net of Hephaestus: Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*," *Interpretation* 13, no. 1 (1984): 15-32; Hooper, "Aristophanes on Human Nature," 567-579. As Hooper notes, the globular human ancestors are by no means perfect or appealing.

from appealing. If the alleged goal of Eros or love is both impossible and undesirable, then what is it that makes it praiseworthy according to Aristophanes' speech?

To pinpoint the praiseworthiness of Eros or the pursuit of the lovers' embrace for Aristophanes, one must differentiate the action of love from its alleged goals. On the surface, Aristophanes praises Eros because the lovers' embrace both resembles the ancient humans and leads to the restoration of human nature. However, as the mutual embrace of lovers is quite different from the physical amalgamation of lovers, the action that Aristophanes recommends is remarkably different from the kind of completion that he fabricates to justify and exhort the pursuit of the lovers' embrace. While the restoration of human nature can eliminate human incompleteness, it is not the only way to tranquilize the pain of incompleteness according to Aristophanes' speech. And in view of the undesirableness and the impossibility of the true restoration of human nature, the lovers' embrace accomplishes the goal of restoration—the sedation of incompleteness—without the defects of true restoration.⁶¹⁹ Indeed, the completion of human nature in Aristophanes' speech is either a thing of the past or a vague possibility in the future. Though the completeness of the ancient humans reveals the incompleteness of human beings living in the present and points to the possibility of some future restoration, Aristophanes is not preoccupied with these distant times. Rather, these other-timely depictions of the complete humans only serve to illuminate the urgency of love for those living in the present. Although the lovers' embrace does not eliminate the sufferings that

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Hooper, "Aristophanes on Human Nature," 578-9. Unlike Hooper, I fail to find a "positive" account of happiness in Aristophanes' speech. Although Hooper correctly recognizes the undesirableness of the true restoration of human nature, he argues that the lovers' embrace or sex, for Aristophanes, can "liberate us from our desire for perfection," and that such an erotic way of life "will be a happy one, one that is an orgy of food, wine and sex" (579). According to my reading, Aristophanes' praise of Eros or love is more "negative" or sedative, and pain (or painlessness) is the only standard that could be used to evaluate the lovers' pursuits.

are caused by one's incompleteness once for all, it can sedate one's perception of incompleteness and remove the painful experiences that it causes, which is the only thing that is good or desirable about the true restoration of human nature. Because the lovers' embrace only resembles or approximates the true restoration of human nature, it is not only the best in the present circumstances but the best simply. For Aristophanes, Eros or the pursuit of the lovers' embrace is praiseworthy because it offers the most viable and the least undesirable remedy to mankind's incompleteness.

In contrast to the previous speakers, Aristophanes does not praise Eros or love as such because it contributes to the lovers' attainment of virtue.⁶²⁰ Instead, Eros is praiseworthy because it fulfills an urgent need: it is good because it is necessary. Through his mythopoetic account of the transformations of human nature, Aristophanes offers a vivid explanation of a painful experience that is shared by many if not all human beings. As Allan Bloom remarks, Aristophanes' speech is "a permanent text that satisfies us in our experience of love."⁶²¹ However, as Mary Nichols notes, "Aristophanes speech leaves no room for philosophy; longing or desire has nothing to do with wisdom."⁶²² Because Eros is characterized as an urgent need of the human body that was haphazardly created by the gods, many other things that could be identified as desirable for human life, such as goodness or beauty, are sidelined and delegitimized. Unlike the two preceding speakers who sought "to adjust the higher to the lower Eros,"⁶²³ Aristophanes is silent on the possibility of a kind of Eros that is higher than the desire and pursuit of bodily

⁶²⁰ See Paul W. Ludwig, "Politics and Eros in Aristophanes' Speech: *Symposium* 191E-192A and The Comedies," *The American Journal of Philology* 117, no. 4 (1996): 542.

⁶²¹ Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 485.

⁶²² Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 51.

⁶²³ Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 41.

completion. Aristophanes seems to maintain that the lovers' embrace can satisfactorily sedate one's painful experiences of incompleteness, as if all such feelings are the result of being deprived of one's missing half. Aristophanes neglects the possibility that human beings are incomplete (or deficient) with respect to the possession of knowledge or virtue, which can be inferred from the preceding speeches. Indeed, having heard Aristophanes' speech, Socrates claims to be baffled and frightened that he should be "at a loss for words" (193e) after listening to Agathon's speech, when the distinction between the good and the necessary has already been eliminated by the comic poet. After Aristophanes' speech which has revealed that Eros is not necessarily the desire for the virtuous or the noble, it remains for Agathon to demonstrate the ability of the poet-like god to transcend necessity, where the worship of Eros culminates in exhilarated dance and song.

VI. Agathon's speech

After Aristophanes has delivered his speech, Eryximachus comments on the difficulty that confronts the two remaining speakers "on account of the fullness and variety of what has been said" (193e). Since he knows that "both Socrates and Agathon were skilled in erotics," however, Eryximachus is confident that they will not be "at a loss for words" (ibid). Both speakers, Eryximachus says, practice an art or expertise of love that facilitates their speeches about Eros, though it is unclear if he thinks that their erotic arts are identical to his own. In response to Eryximachus' remarks, Socrates says that if Eryximachus had to speak in his place, Eryximachus "would really be afraid and as wholly baffled" (193a) as he is. Though Eryximachus spoke finely in Aristophanes' place after Pausanias' had spoken, he would be less fluent if he had to speak in Socrates'

place.⁶²⁴ Here, Agathon interjects by accusing Socrates of bewitching him, as Socrates' remarks would have him "believe that the audience is full of expectation" and cause him to crumble under pressure (ibid). Since Agathon had no trouble speaking in front of the large audience upon the platform of the dramatic festival, Socrates says, he would "surely be forgetful" (ibid) if he thinks that he could bewitch Agathon by raising the audience's expectations. Because Socrates had witnessed Agathon's "courage and greatness of mind" displaying his speeches to the many, Socrates does not believe that Agathon would "be in a turmoil on account of us few human beings" (194b). And in response to Agathon's claim that "to a man of sense a few who are sensible are more terrifying than many fools" (ibid), Socrates claims that he is not wise as he had been a member of the audience among the many (194c). Instead of allowing Agathon to display his praise of Eros right away, Socrates wishes to understand his apprehensions about speaking before the wise.

As Phaedrus says when he suspends the conversation between these two speakers, Socrates would be indifferent to the "present arrangements, provided only that he has someone to converse with, especially if he is beautiful" (194d). Indeed, the beautiful Phaedrus had also conversed with Socrates at great lengths about the nobility and shamefulness of speeches in the *Phaedrus*.⁶²⁵ Similar to Socrates' questions for Lysias (or the personification of the approachable kind of rhetoric) about the disgrace of "speaking or writing,"⁶²⁶ Socrates asks Agathon if he would also be ashamed before the many if he believed that he was doing "something disgraceful" (194c). Can actions that

⁶²⁴ To avoid offending Agathon, Socrates makes his difficult speech only after an agreement with Agathon had been reached. See *Symposium* 199b-201c.

⁶²⁵ See *Phaedrus* 258c-d.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, 258d.

seem shameful to the few who are wise seem noble to the many? Does the nobility or shamefulness of one's action vary according to the number or the intelligence of one's audience? Since Agathon is unable to directly respond to Socrates' question due to Phaedrus' interruption, his understanding of the nobility or beauty of speeches can only be discerned through an examination of his speech about Eros. In view of Agathon's narcissistic speech, it is safe to say that he does not think that it is necessary for the speaker to know "the truth about the matters of which he is to speak" if he wishes to speak well or nobly.⁶²⁷ The speeches of Agathon may vary because the many and the few may hold different opinions about the noble, but the few—the other symposiasts whom Aristodemus calls wise⁶²⁸—do not necessarily believe that only the truthful is noble.

Unlike the preceding speakers, Agathon's praise of Eros does not dwell on human institutions or pursuits. Rather, Agathon's speech focuses on the qualities of Eros as a god, hence it is "the most religious of all the speeches."⁶²⁹ And instead of focusing on the philanthropy of the god or his contributions to human well-being, Agathon's speech systematically demonstrates that Eros is the happiest of the gods. According to Agathon, Eros is the happiest god because he is the most beautiful and the most virtuous or powerful. To demonstrate the happiness of Eros as such, Agathon produces a clearly organized speech⁶³⁰ that describes the beauty and virtue of the god in sequence, followed by a melodious peroration which enunciates the god's beneficence. With each successive part of Agathon's speech, the bodily form of Eros becomes clearer to the senses and more identifiable with the poet himself, and the euphonic peroration is nothing short of an

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 259e.

⁶²⁸ *Symposium* 174c; cf. 204a.

⁶²⁹ Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 490.

⁶³⁰ See Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 59.

apotheosis where the beautiful poet and the happiest god chant as one. Because Eros is drawn toward those who are like him, Agathon the victorious poet who is inspired or “touched”⁶³¹ by the god shares the god’s beauty and virtue. In praising Eros, Agathon in truth praises himself.⁶³² By identifying himself with this beautiful poet-god, Agathon’s speech befits his triumph at the Dionysia where he displayed his poetic wisdom to “more than thirty thousand Greek witnesses” (175e). At the same time, Agathon’s self-congratulatory speech conceals the truth about *erōs* as some affliction of human nature. Mankind’s natural love or lack of beauty (or the good) is transformed into the admiration of beautiful Eros or the beautiful poet who resembles the beautiful god. In other words, the beautiful poet obscures the distinction between the gods and human beings⁶³³ in his beautiful but supernatural speech. Without such an important distinction, both Eros and the poet who resembles Eros are said to possess complete or infallible wisdom, which renders Socratic philosophy or the erotic pursuit of wisdom unnecessary.⁶³⁴ Whereas philosophy is eclipsed by the pursuit of one’s own half in Aristophanes’ mythopoetic speech, it is anachronistic to pursue wisdom under the reign of Agathon’s Eros or the god-like poet who had eliminated Necessity⁶³⁵ with his beautiful speech.

A. The organization of Agathon’s speech

Agathon begins by describing the method and the organization of his speech. The “proper manner in every praise of anything,” he says, must address the kind of thing that is being praised and “what sort of things he causes” (195a). In the first two parts of his

⁶³¹ See *Symposium* 175c.

⁶³² Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 54; Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 191.

⁶³³ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 60; see also Duque, “Reorientation of Imperialistic Eros,” 103-4.

⁶³⁴ Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 56.

⁶³⁵ *Symposium* 195c, 197c.

speech, Agathon demonstrates the happiness—the beauty and virtue—of Eros, and in the third or concluding part, he declares the good things that are caused by the god in a song.⁶³⁶ Each of the first two parts is composed of four smaller parts, describing four qualities of beauty and four virtues,⁶³⁷ though the division between beauty and goodness⁶³⁸ does not rest on a division of body and soul. According to Agathon’s depiction, Eros is a soft and malleable being that “touches with his feet and every other part the softest of the softest” (195e). The soft things that are touched by the soft god, “the characters and souls of gods and human beings” (ibid), are also envisioned and portrayed in terms of the body.⁶³⁹ Over the course of Agathon’s speech, one gets the sense that the poet is identifying the beautiful and virtuous god with himself. Like Eros, Agathon is also young, soft, supple, and scented. In addition to these qualities of beauty, Agathon says, Eros is also “a good poet” (196e). The poet and the god whom he praises are alike in both form and action. When Agathon breaks into song at the end of his speech, it is no longer possible to distinguish the poet from the god whom he praises. In short, Agathon’s speech is organized in a way that gradually establishes the resemblance between the god and the poet in terms of both beauty and virtue (or power) and conceals the crucial differences between the poet who speaks and the god whom the poet praises.

B. Agathon’s display of Eros

⁶³⁶ See Benardete, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 65.

⁶³⁷ Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 161.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 160; see also Benardete, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 61.

⁶³⁹ See Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 196. For Agathon, the soul is corporeal, hence the beauty of “corporeal Eros” could touch or flow into it. The mind is absent from Agathon’s depiction of the soul. Cf. *Phaedrus* 246a-247d.

As several scholars have noted, Agathon portrays the qualities of Eros as a god without defining what Eros or a god is.⁶⁴⁰ Agathon says that Eros is the happiest god because he is “the most beautiful and the best” (195a),⁶⁴¹ but he does not offer a genealogy of the god that accounts for his beauty and goodness. The superlative beauty and goodness of Eros vaguely hints at the ugliness and wickedness of some of the other gods, but Agathon insists that they are also happy. Collectively, the gods are characterized by their happiness (beauty or virtue or both), but Eros is happier than the other gods because he is both more beautiful and more virtuous or powerful.

To demonstrate the beauty of Eros, Agathon employs a series of “proofs” that rest on the principle that “like to like always draws near” (195b). Unlike Eryximachus who claims that sameness produces harmony or concord within and between the various bodies, however, Agathon claims that similar beings are always adjoined or touching. Because Eros is drawn toward those who are young, soft, supple, and scented, the god himself must also possess these qualities of beauty. Instead of a desire for something one lacks or some institution that facilitates or hinders the pursuit of one’s desires, Agathon depicts Eros as a youth whose beautiful form is accessible to a range of bodily senses. When Agathon demonstrates the god’s goodness, the principle of “likeness” is temporarily replaced by a premise about the god’s almighty power. Eros is the most virtuous or the best because he is the most powerful; he is just because he neither commits nor suffers injustice, moderate because he is the most powerful pleasure, and courageous because he possesses the brave Ares and not vice versa (196c-d). However,

⁶⁴⁰ Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 490; Benardete, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 63; Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 181; Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 169.

⁶⁴¹ Cf. *Gorgias* 448c.

the principle of “likeness” reappears when Agathon describes the god’s wisdom as a poet. Those whom the god touches, Agathon claims, become poets themselves, and all the other productive arts are also invented out of the gods’ “love of beauty” (197b). Eros “touches” those who share his beauty and gives or teaches his poetic wisdom to them through his touch.

Because Eros is the most powerful god, Agathon says, he is not affected by violence or anything else. Agathon tacitly denies Aristophanes’ claim that love is the outcome of some debilitating transformation of human nature. Contrary to Aristophanes’ mythopoetic account, Agathon’s Eros is not an urgent need that originates in human suffering. In fact, Eros or the reign of this young god is said to postdate all violence among the gods and human beings. The terrible “castrations and bindings” (195c) of the gods which Aristophanes had mentioned, Agathon says, had taken place “through the monarchy of Necessity” (197b), prior to the birth of Eros. Ever since Eros had replaced Necessity as the “king of the gods” (195c), Agathon says, “all good things have resulted for gods as well as for human beings from loving the beautiful things” (197b). Under the reign of Eros, who is “the youngest of gods and ever young” (*ibid*), all the necessary but ugly occurrences—all violence and suffering—no longer take place, thus it is inconceivable that love should be the symptom of some human affliction. According to Agathon, Eros cannot be the love of one’s missing half because he is perfect and unblemished by any defect (196b).

By replacing the universal affliction of human nature in Aristophanes’ speech with a beautiful image of the god, Agathon returns to an exclusive notion of love which reminds of the selectiveness of Pausanias’ “Uranian” Eros. Only a few human beings

share the god's beauty and power. Though Agathon says that there is no suffering under the reign of Eros, he does not say that all human beings resemble the god in terms of both beauty and virtue. In other words, Agathon's depiction of Eros as a beautiful beloved compels him to neglect all human sufferings or the truth about *erōs* as an affection (*pathos*) of human nature. i.e., the painful fact that love is necessarily the symptom of some lack or deficiency. Since Agathon speaks about Eros from the perspective of a beautiful beloved who already possesses the things (i.e., fame and fortune) that most human beings desire but cannot attain, it is not necessary for Agathon to burden his lovers with virtuous or selfless actions like Phaedrus does. Instead, Agathon the triumphant poet simply identifies himself with Eros and praises the god in an autobiography. At the same time, Agathon's triumphant speech obscures the crucial differences between the gods and human beings, though it is not difficult to identify the irony in his claim that the present age is one of peace and happiness.⁶⁴² Agathon vividly projects the happiness of Eros as a poet-like god, yet one cannot help but to recognize the mortal vanity of the "god" who resembles the poet.

C. Agathon's praise of Eros

For Agathon, Eros is praiseworthy because he is the happiest god, and he is the happiest because he is the most beautiful and the most virtuous (or powerful). Indeed, Agathon is the first speaker to draw the distinction between beauty and virtue.⁶⁴³ Though it is possible to identify the contradictions between the soft beauty of Eros and the harshness of the traditional Greek virtues,⁶⁴⁴ it is worthwhile to consider the relations

⁶⁴² Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, 22-23.

⁶⁴³ Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 61; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 160-1.

⁶⁴⁴ Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 173-182.

between the beauty and virtue of the god to arrive at a clearer understanding of his praiseworthiness (or happiness) for Agathon. In essence, the virtues or powers of Agathon's Eros depend on the god's beauty⁶⁴⁵ but not vice versa. According to Agathon, Eros can act justly and suffer no injustices, overpower all other pleasures, possess or dominate Ares, and inspire the other gods to create because he is exceedingly beautiful. Since Agathon does not say that the virtues of Eros are beautiful (or noble) in a way that is distinct from the god's sensual beauty, one could argue that the "virtues" or powers of Eros as such are derived from the intoxicating appeal of the god's beautiful form. Like the beautiful poet who defeats his opponents in the contest of speeches with his beautiful words, it is the beauty of Eros that allows him to dictate "the thought of all gods and human beings" (197e).⁶⁴⁶ Indeed, the power of beauty as such can be identified as the power of a certain kind of pleasure,⁶⁴⁷ and it comes as no surprise that Agathon calls Eros the greatest or the most powerful pleasure (196c). In other words, the reign of Agathon's Eros is a reign of pleasure,⁶⁴⁸ where the virtues of the god are no different from the power to produce pleasure as such. Under the reign of Eros or the pleasures of his sensual beauty, Agathon declares, there is "peace among human beings" and "the resting of winds and sleeping of care" (197c).⁶⁴⁹ Since all the ugly or necessary things have been purged from his reign of beauty, the starry-eyed subjects of this beautiful god have no need for quarrel. There will be no suffering so long as everyone follows Agathon in song and dance and submit to the rule of the beautiful poet-god.

⁶⁴⁵ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 161, 164-6.

⁶⁴⁶ Indeed, Agathon's cosmetic account of the virtues of Eros reminds of "the powers of an absolute tyrant. See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 182.

⁶⁴⁷ See R.E. Allen, "A Note on the Elenchus of Agathon: *Symposium* 199c-201c," *The Monist* 50, no. 3 (1966): 462.

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. *Phaedrus* 238c-e.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. Euripides, *Bacchae* 280-285.

Unlike Aristophanes who removes the beautiful or equates it to the necessary, Agathon removes the necessary and defines beauty as an awesome power that is untarnished by necessity or suffering. What Agathon fails to mention, however, is the relation between the power of the beauty of Eros and the affections of human nature. Agathon is silent on mankind's susceptibility to the pleasures of beautiful appearances or words that conjure beauty as such. By removing the necessary from his depiction of Eros, Agathon conceals the affections of human beings which account for the power of the god in relation to his subjects. Certainly, it would be fantastic if Agathon speaks the truth about the happiness of the beautiful god and his willing subjects, but one cannot help but to question the nature of the happiness that is produced by beauty as such. Is it true that the virtues are identical to powers of the poet who can produce beautiful or pleasant appearances? And is it reasonable to believe that beauty as such has the power to eradicate human suffering? After all, the pleasures that are produced by sensual beauty cannot transcend or eliminate the necessary and ugly things in human lives, however powerful that pleasure or beauty is, nor is it possible to identify beauty as such with the good or the wise. By displaying these speeches of the poets, Plato showcases a kind of rhetoric that is far more powerful and dangerous than the speeches of the preceding speakers. Unlike those who must rely on the authority of an institution or expertise, these speakers craft stories and images that vividly capture some profound truth about the human condition. Indeed, the poets' powerful accounts of Eros are the most difficult to reckon with for the philosophical lover, insofar as his own desire and pursuit of wisdom is delegitimized by these compelling speakers, who either speak on behalf of the god or in his voice. Of course, it would be a mistake to think that Plato prefers these accounts of

Eros or that he speaks for himself through the mouth of the poets. Rather, by displaying these powerful accounts of Eros that would render philosophy unnecessary or impious in juxtaposition to Socrates' speech, Plato in truth defends the philosopher's love of wisdom by allowing his audience to examine the various speeches about Eros as the philosophers would, that is, the dialectic (collection and division) of *erōs* as regards to the actions and affections of both speech and soul.

As Socrates shows in his uninterrupted conversation with Agathon prior to his own recollected speech, Eros is by necessity the love of something which one desires or lacks. As such, Eros as the love of beauty is necessarily rooted in the lack and need of beauty (201b). Since the good things are also beautiful, moreover, Eros cannot be good either (201c). By questioning Agathon about the meaning or definition of Eros, Socrates compels the young poet to speak according to necessity. Although it is true that Socrates' demonstration forces Agathon to admit his ignorance about the truth and "lose face" by contradicting himself,⁶⁵⁰ Socrates saves the young poet from the more serious accusation of impiety. According to Socrates' recollections, Agathon had said that the gods also loved beautiful things when it is now clear that love is "of somethings" and "of whatever things the need for which is present for him" (200e). By questioning Agathon about the meaning of Eros according to necessity, Socrates sidesteps an obvious implication of Agathon's earlier remarks, which is that the gods who arranged or invented things out of their love of beauty are not themselves beautiful (or good). Socrates could have easily shown that Agathon's speech was impious, against his claim that anyone who would challenge his authority is a disturbance to the peaceful reign of the beautiful poet-god.

⁶⁵⁰ See Chris Emlyn-Jones, "The Dramatic Poet and His Audience: Agathon and Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*," *Hermes* 132 (2004): 396.

Though it is not clear that it is this realization that compels Agathon to admit ignorance, Socrates' maneuvering does allow him to begin his speech from the premise that Eros is itself neither beautiful nor good. In effect, Socrates disenchants his audience of the beauty of Eros or the poet who resembles the god and their almighty power.⁶⁵¹ However, it remains for Socrates to display the "most beautiful parts of the truth" about *erōs*, arranged "in the seemliest manner possible" (198d). How can anyone eulogize anything if it is not beautiful or good,⁶⁵² and what is the seemliest or the most appropriate manner for making such a eulogy? And most importantly, how does Plato's Socrates defend the philosopher's love of wisdom against the powerful speeches of the poets that delegitimize philosophy as such?

VII. Socrates' speech

Socrates offers a difficult speech in the *Symposium*.⁶⁵³ Unlike the preceding speakers, he neither adorns Eros with "the greatest and fairest things possible" (198e) nor organizes his speech to praise Eros in this manner. Instead, Socrates claims to speak the truth about Eros, "even though the phrasing and arrangement of the sentences just fall as they come" (199b). In other words, the seemliness of Socrates' speech is not the result of its stylistic clarity.⁶⁵⁴ Although he only speaks about the "most beautiful parts of the truth" rather than the whole truth (198d), the seemliness of Socrates' speech depends on its ability to convey these parts of the truth⁶⁵⁵ about Eros to his interlocutors despite its

⁶⁵¹ See Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 60.

⁶⁵² For a discussion of Socrates' speech that focuses on this question, see Allen, "*Symposium* 199c-201c," 460-463.

⁶⁵³ See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 197.

⁶⁵⁴ See *Phaedrus* 266d-268a.

⁶⁵⁵ Later, Alcibiades will also claim to speak the truth when he offers his speech about Socrates. See *Symposium* 214e. In a sense, every symposiast speaks their version of the truth, but Plato may not share all (or any) of their views.

apparent lack of organization. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates had said that the artful speechwriter who intends to write in an appropriate or fitting manner must employ “the dialectic method” (276e) to “adorn his discourse accordingly, offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul” (277c).⁶⁵⁶ Like his speech about *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*,⁶⁵⁷ Socrates’ praise of Eros in the *Symposium* is also of the elaborate kind. The truth that Socrates wishes to convey through speech is complicated, as far as *erōs* (both as a daemon and as a kind of human or mortal affection) is itself a complicated phenomenon. To understand the seemliness of Socrates’ elaborate speech about Eros, which is coherent or harmonious despite its apparent lack of organization, this interpretation—like the interpretation of the other parts of Plato’s philosophical writing—also draws from the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*.

Closely examined, Socrates’ speech displays Diotima’s disparate teachings about *erōs* that are potentially incompatible with one another. In the earliest conversations that Socrates recollects, Diotima presents Eros as one of the daemons who are “between mortal and immortal,” allowing for the “whole intercourse and conversation of gods with human beings” (202e). As the son of Penia and Poros, Eros the daemon is “always poor” and “always weaving devices...philosophizing through all his life” (203d). Here, Eros is by birth the love “in regard to the beautiful” (203c), and since “wisdom is one of the most beautiful things” (204b), Eros the daemon is also a philosopher who loves and pursues

⁶⁵⁶ The discussion of the propriety of writing begins at *Phaedrus* 274b. Socrates uses the same word, *euprepeia*, at *Symposium* 197d. As the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* shows, to write in the appropriate manner from the philosophers’ point of view, the writer must possess knowledge of the truth about the souls of one’s audience and the various kinds of speeches that would befit (*proseḗkō* 276b, 276e or *prosarmozō* 277c) the various kinds of souls.

⁶⁵⁷ See *Phaedrus* 265a-266a. In the discussion of speech, Socrates refers to his two speeches about *erōs* as one complete speech.

wisdom. When Diotima responds to Socrates' question about the use⁶⁵⁸ of Eros for human beings, however, the meaning of Eros expands⁶⁵⁹ and becomes the common desire of "all human beings" to possess "the good things" and be happy for all times (205a).⁶⁶⁰ For much of this section of Socrates' speech,⁶⁶¹ Eros the philosophical daemon is absent or obscured.⁶⁶² Instead of describing Eros the daemon and his pursuit of wisdom, Diotima now offers an account of the erotic passion of all mortal creatures for immortality, which includes mankind's "love of renown" (208c).⁶⁶³ After the descriptive account of the serious activities of these mortal lovers,⁶⁶⁴ however, Diotima changes course again by divulging the upward journey that is taken by the philosophical lover, who alone is said to be able to lay hold of true beauty and "become dear to gods" (212a). According to Diotima's "perfect revelations" (210a) of erotics, only those who engage in the "correct practice of pederasty" (211b) will lead a life that is worth living for human beings and "become immortal" (212a). And at the end of his elaborate speech, Socrates claims to have been persuaded by Diotima that for the possession of happiness or immortality "one could not easily get a better co-worker with human nature than Eros," and that he always eulogizes "the power and courage" of this philosophical daemon to the extent of his capacities (212b). The human lover of wisdom who practices "correct pederasty," it

⁶⁵⁸ The word at 204c is *chreian*, which can also be translated as "need." See Dover, *Symposium*, 145. As Dover notes: "the point is, 'what is the role of Eros in human life?'"

⁶⁵⁹ See Roochnik, "The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse," 119.

⁶⁶⁰ *Eudaimonia* can be translated as happiness, well-being or flourishing. There is an unspoken connection between Diotima's teachings about Eros as a daemon (*daimōn*) and the claim that those who possess good things will be *eudaimōn*.

⁶⁶¹ For a helpful division of Socrates' speech, see Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 183. My reading highlights the breaks at 204c and 210a.

⁶⁶² See Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 81; Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 252. Cf. Gould, *Platonic Love*, 51.

⁶⁶³ Cf. *Phaedrus* 257d-258c.

⁶⁶⁴ See Duque, "Reorientation of Imperialistic Erōs," 103.

seems, is closely related to Eros the philosophical daemon, and it is this daemonic individual whom Socrates praises. At the same time, if Socrates' Diotima wished to praise Eros the philosophical daemon and persuade Socrates of the benefits of leading the philosopher's way of life, then why did she offer such a lengthy account of *erōs*—the common desire of all human beings for happiness—and its procreative manifestations? Likewise, if Socrates had wished to praise Eros the philosophical daemon or the human lover who resembles Eros in the pursuit of wisdom, then why did he decide to display Diotima's elaborate teachings about both Eros and *erōs*? What does Socrates accomplish by displaying the variegated teachings that he had received from Diotima, and how does he eulogize the power and courage of Eros in his elaborate speech?

In effect, Socrates' speech can be understood as a polite response to the preceding speeches.⁶⁶⁵ Though it begins and ends with Diotima's depictions of the philosophical lover, either daemonic or human, much of what Socrates says in his speech consists of an interpretation of the other speeches in terms of the erotic desires or affects of the other speakers.⁶⁶⁶ And because Socrates has to praise Eros in *this* speech contest,⁶⁶⁷ he is largely silent on the blameworthy kind of *erōs* which he had exposed and censured in the *Phaedrus*.⁶⁶⁸ Instead of exposing the disease-like eroticisms of the earlier speakers who sought to legitimize the exploitation of their lover or beloved for the sake of gain or pleasure,⁶⁶⁹ Socrates elevates the creative pursuits of the poets by giving them a divine

⁶⁶⁵ See Bacon, "Socrates' Crowned," 427; Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 71; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 60. Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium* 244-5.

⁶⁶⁶ See Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 83; Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 517; Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*; 201, 253.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 235d-236e.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 237b. Socrates' "exposition" of Lysias' deceptive eroticism is also discreet.

⁶⁶⁹ See Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 517. As Bloom notes, Diotima's speech responds to the speeches of Phaedrus and Pausanias through instruction as opposed to insult. However, it is not clear that they are receptive to what Diotima or Socrates has to say.

purpose.⁶⁷⁰ Because mortal creatures can only attain a semblance of the immortality of the gods by way of engendering, Socrates' Diotima says, the poets, like the politicians and the lawgivers who are also pregnant in the soul instead of the body, compose speeches about virtue to supply themselves with "immortal fame and memory" (209d). According to Socrates' interpretation, the poets' speeches are the products of their desire to become immortal or godlike, which is certainly a gentle transfiguration of Agathon's projection that he and Eros, the happiest of the gods, are already the same. Moreover, Socrates' account of the "god-loving" nature of all mortal creatures also tacitly rejects Aristophanes' assertions about the natural "goodness" of the lovers' embrace. Instead of being the incomplete halves of an original whole, the lovers in Socrates' speech are characterized by their lack and desire for the divine. In short, Socrates' speech politely transfigures the poets from those who possessed divinity or knowledge of the truth about the gods to erotic or deficient creatures who desire to become godlike.⁶⁷¹

At the same time, it is Socrates' polite interpretation of the poets' eroticisms that demonstrates the power and courage of Eros as a philosopher or "a lover of beauty."⁶⁷² Because he correctly opines about his own lack of wisdom, Eros, who in truth resembles Socrates as opposed to Agathon, has pursued knowledge of the truth about the highest things all his life.⁶⁷³ And because he has scrutinized the beauty or goodness of the whole range of apparently beautiful or good things against the things that are said about them—as the "correct practice of pederasty" (211b) entails—Socrates, a philosophical lover who

⁶⁷⁰ See Newell, *Ruling Passion*, 1; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 60-1.

⁶⁷¹ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 240.

⁶⁷² *Phaedrus* 248d; see also *Symposium* 210a-e.

⁶⁷³ See *Republic* 367d-e.

resembles Eros the philosophical daemon,⁶⁷⁴ is able to challenge the powerful speeches of the poets and their teachings about the beautiful and the good. Instead of directly refuting their speeches about Eros, however, Socrates displays various kinds of erotic pursuits in juxtaposition, which sublimates the poets' pursuit of immortality into the philosopher's pursuit of the divine. In addition to the subtle rearrangement of the relationship between the poets and the gods according to nature or necessity, Socrates' elaborate speech—like Plato's philosophical writing—also compels his audience to examine its disparate parts in a dialectical manner.⁶⁷⁵ According to Diotima's elaborate teachings of erotics, *erōs* is collectively the love or pursuit of happiness, but the desire to become truly happy is not identical to the power that attains it. Not everyone can possess good things or become happy because most human beings are ignorant of their ignorance about the highest or best things.⁶⁷⁶ Because they are not aware of their own ignorance or lacking, most human beings—lovers who “want the good things to be theirs always” (205a)—do not pursue knowledge of the truth about good and evil. Instead, they are said to follow their animal instincts and pursue immortality through engendering as if immortality was identical to divinity or happiness. Like the other beasts, human beings instinctively pursue immortality by means of engendering,⁶⁷⁷ and the poets also pursue

⁶⁷⁴ See *Symposium* 219c. Alcibiades calls Socrates a “truly amazing and daemonic being” in his eulogy.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 248. Unlike Strauss who argues that Diotima does not offer a philosophical account of philosophy in the last section of her speech, my reading offers a dialectical or philosophical interpretation of both this section and Socrates' speech as a whole. If Socrates' speech does not facilitate the dialectical examination of speech and love, then it would not be possible to recognize that “Diotima teaches not the beautiful but the good” (238). In other words, the praiseworthiness of philosophy does not depend on the beauty of Diotima's poetic representation of the aim of philosophy. Instead, it rests on the power and courage of philosophy to recognize the beauty of goodness and the ugliness (or wickedness) of many apparently beautiful things. Likewise, the philosophers' speech is good or beautiful because it facilitates the serious pursuit of philosophizing.

⁶⁷⁶ See *Apology* 28a-30c.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 250e-251a. Socrates offers a more psychological account of erotic procreation in the palinode. According to that speech, human beings will become more beast-like as they become increasingly forgetful over the generations or rebirths.

the same kind of immortality by writing “speeches about virtue.”⁶⁷⁸ Collectively, these pursuits of immortality or perpetual life can be identified as a kind of *erōs* or erotic pursuit of happiness, but in view of Diotima’s revelations about the path that the philosophical lover takes to pursue the divine, it is not the only kind. While the gods are both immortal and happy, it is not clear if procreative immortality, which is distinct from the immutability of the beautiful idea of the good (208a-b), allows one to become happy or godlike.⁶⁷⁹

Put differently, it is by examining Socrates’ elaborate speech in a dialectical or philosophical manner that it becomes possible “to bring to the light” the resemblance that Diotima, whom Socrates calls a perfect sophist (208c), produces between the various kinds of *erōs*. Like his “chance utterances” in the *Phaedrus*,⁶⁸⁰ Socrates’ elaborate speech in the *Symposium* also uses and facilitates the two principles of dialectic. Unlike his speech in the *Phaedrus*, however, Socrates’ does not collect and divide *erōs* as the various parts of madness in the *Symposium*. Instead, Socrates displays the various pursuits of happiness or divinity in juxtaposition. Like the common desire of all mortal creatures for immortality, Eros the philosophical daemon also loves and pursues the divine. But unlike those who are ignorant of their ignorance about the beautiful or the good—all mortal creatures that cannot engage in dialectic⁶⁸¹—Eros and the philosophical lover who resembles Eros are dissatisfied with the unexamined opinion that happiness or

⁶⁷⁸ See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 220-222.

⁶⁷⁹ In Socrates’ palinode, souls are collectively considered as immortal (entities capable of self-motion), but they are not necessarily happy. See *Phaedrus* 245c-248e. When the charioteer or the mind of the soul beholds the immutable truths above the heavens, it is the heavens rather than the truths that revolve or move (247c-e). At 249c, Socrates says that it is through the recollection of the highest things that causes the gods to be divine.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 265d.

⁶⁸¹ *Symposium* 210a-211d; *Phaedrus* 249b-c.

godlikeness can be attained if one comes into possession of perpetual life. From the philosophers' point of view, the divinity of the gods is not identical to the kind of immortality that is available to all mortal creatures, and mortals who have attained a semblance of immortality through procreation or begetting, such as the famous poets and lawgivers, cannot be readily identified with the gods. Like his two-fold speech in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates praises the philosopher's love of wisdom in the *Symposium* by speaking about *erōs* in a way that would allow his audience to think as the philosophers would and reflect on the moral worth—the power and courage—of philosophy for themselves. In both dialogues, Socrates depicts the philosopher's journey through an image of ascent, where the philosopher would spend his entire life examining the beauty or goodness of the various things that are said to contribute to human well-being—such as *logos* and *erōs*—in a dialectical way. In both images,⁶⁸² the ultimate goal⁶⁸³ of the philosopher's pursuits is described as an elevated place that is difficult to reach, where the truly beautiful things, free of “mortal foolishness” (211e), would finally become accessible to the philosopher's mind after a lot of unrelenting toil.⁶⁸⁴ It is the desire of the philosopher's mind for knowledge of the truth as such that motivates his toilsome (and courageous) examinations of the preeminent teachings about the highest things, and it is the existence of such truths that establishes the philosopher's inquiries about the beautiful

⁶⁸² See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 248. As Strauss notes, Socrates offers “a poetic presentation of philosophy.” My assertion is that Socrates' image of philosophy is itself philosophical because it facilitates the dialectic of *erōs*, that is, the examination of the goodness of the various kinds of human eroticisms in terms of their powers and affects.

⁶⁸³ See Roochnik, “The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse,” 125; F. C. White, “Love and Beauty in Plato's *Symposium*,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 109 (1989): 151-3. Although it is possible to distinguish the good from the beautiful, Socrates does not make this distinction explicit. From the philosopher's point of view, the good is the most beautiful.

⁶⁸⁴ See *Phaedrus* 246d-248e, 256a-b.

and the good.⁶⁸⁵ In both dialogues, both Plato and his Socrates praise the philosopher's love of wisdom by juxtaposing the various kinds of *erōs* in their speeches, as only such an elaborate manner of speech could facilitate the action of philosophy and disclose its moral worth for human beings.

A. The organization of Socrates' speech

After the second conversation between the two who were sitting on the last couch, when Socrates had managed to reach an agreement with Agathon about the fact that Eros lacks and is in need of both beautiful and good things, Socrates decides to turn to the speech about Eros that he had heard from Diotima⁶⁸⁶ whom he claims had taught him erotics (201d). Instead of participating in the speech contest where his own speech would be compared to the other speeches in terms of its stylistic beauty, Socrates presents himself as a student of erotics who had the same false opinions about Eros as Agathon did. Since Diotima had refuted Socrates with the same arguments with which Socrates had refuted Agathon, it is possible that Agathon, who has just admitted that he knew nothing of what he had said (201b), would also turn to philosophy as Socrates did if he also receives Diotima's teachings. By displaying to Agathon the teachings that he had received from Diotima, Socrates hopes to convince Agathon to turn to philosophy or philosophical speeches.⁶⁸⁷ However, it is not clear that the triumphant Agathon, who

⁶⁸⁵ See Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy," 445-456. As Cherniss notes: "the 'dialogue of search,' by demonstrating the hopelessness of all other expedients, show that the definitions requisite to normative ethics are possible only on the assumption that there exist, apart from phenomena, substantive objects of these definitions which alone are the source of the values attaching to phenomenal existence" (445). See also Roochnik, "The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse," 125.

⁶⁸⁶ As scholars have noted, it is highly likely that Diotima is a fictitious character whom Socrates had made up on the spot. See Dover, *Symposium*, 137; Hunter, *Plato's Symposium*, 81. See also Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 184-5.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 257b, 261a.

resembles Socrates by admitting to his ignorance, would reflect on Socrates' recollected speech and be convinced by Diotima's teachings.

After introducing Diotima, Socrates says that he would organize his speech as Agathon did by first telling "who Eros himself is and what sort he is," followed by an account of Eros' deeds (201e). However, Socrates' speech is not clearly organized according to this plan. Indeed, Diotima seems to achieve these explicit goals of Socrates' speech in their earliest conversations.⁶⁸⁸ Contrary to Socrates' belief that "Eros was a great god" (ibid), Diotima says, Eros as the love of beautiful things indicates the lack or need of beauty (202d). Since Eros does not possess the beautiful things which he desires, he cannot be a god, for all gods are "beautiful and happy" (202c). In response to Diotima's claim that Eros as the desire for beautiful things cannot himself be beautiful, Socrates asks if Eros is therefore ugly. Like her response to Socrates' question about the ugliness of Eros, Diotima responds to Socrates' subsequent question about the mortality of Eros by demonstrating the possibility of the other,⁶⁸⁹ which exists "in between" (202e) these opposites.⁶⁹⁰ According to Diotima's brief responses, Eros is neither beautiful nor ugly just as correct opinion is neither wisdom nor complete ignorance. And just as Eros is neither beautiful nor ugly, he is also neither a mortal nor an immortal, but a great daemon who exists between the gods and mortals. It is difficult to get a sense of Socrates' understanding of these brief remarks as he does not challenge or question Diotima's claims in any way. Instead of asking Diotima to clarify the intermediary qualities of Eros

⁶⁸⁸ Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 198.

⁶⁸⁹ See *Parmenides* 159e.

⁶⁹⁰ The adverb *metaxu* can be used to denote a place, time, or quality. In Socrates' speech, it refers to the quality (power and affect) of Eros as a daemon in contradistinction to the qualities of the gods and most mortal creatures.

and how they are related to one another, the younger Socrates of Socrates' recollections asks her about the kind of power that Eros possesses as a daemon. If the daemons are collectively neither mortal nor immortal, then what kind of power do they possess in relation to death?

Contrary to expectation, Diotima does not speak of the power of Eros in relation to death. Instead, she defines the intermediary power of the daemons as the ability to facilitate the communication between the gods and human beings. Since the daemons are the intermediaries between the gods and human beings, they are said to fill up the interval between the two so that the whole is "bound together by it" (ibid).⁶⁹¹ Because "a god does not mingle with a human being" (203a),⁶⁹² it is up to the daemons to facilitate "the whole intercourse and conversation" between them, which takes place in the form of "all divination and the art of the priests who deal with sacrifices, initiatory rituals, incantations, and every kind of soothsaying and magic" (202e). Instead of characterizing the three kinds of beings in terms of their various powers in relation to death, Diotima's account of the intermediacy of the daemons characterizes the relationship between the gods and human beings in terms of speech or communication.⁶⁹³ According to Diotima, it is the power of the daemons to facilitate the communication between the gods and human beings, and unlike the daemoniac individuals who are wise in such things, "he who is wise in anything else concerning either arts or handicrafts is vulgar and low" (203a). To reiterate, Diotima does not respond to Socrates' question about the mortality of Eros by speaking about the power of Eros as a daemon in relation to death. The power of Eros as

⁶⁹¹ Cf. *Symposium* 186a-b.

⁶⁹² Cf. *Symposium* 195d-196a.

⁶⁹³ See Gould, *Platonic Love*, 37-38, 45.

one of the daemons is “logical” as opposed to “existential,” and the relationship between the gods and human beings is one of communication or the lack thereof.⁶⁹⁴

Here, Socrates asks Diotima about the parentage of Eros. Rather than identifying the parents of Eros in a straightforward manner, however, Diotima decides to tell Socrates the story or myth of the birth of Eros as the son of Penia and Poros. Diotima seems to interpret Socrates’ question about the parentage of Eros as an extension of his previous question about the power of the daemons. By asking about the parentage of Eros as opposed to the parentage of all daemons, Socrates seems to wish to learn about the power that is unique to Eros, insofar as the power of any being can be traced to its parentage or genesis.⁶⁹⁵ According to Diotima’ story, Eros was begotten on the birthday of Aphrodite in the garden of Zeus. Penia, the mother of Eros, had arrived at the celebration of the gods to beg. When Poros, the son of Metis,⁶⁹⁶ got drunk on nectar⁶⁹⁷ and fell asleep in the garden of Zeus, Penia, “who because of her own lack of resources was plotting to have a child made out of Poros, reclined beside him and conceived Eros” (203b-c). Because of his unique parentage, Diotima says, Eros is not “tender and beautiful, as the many believe” (203d). Since he is the son of Penia or poverty, Eros is “always poor...tough, squalid, shoeless, and homeless, always lying on the ground

⁶⁹⁴ See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 191.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. *Symposium* 178a-c.

⁶⁹⁶ According to the *Theogony*, Metis is the offspring of Okeanos and Tethys. Aside from Poros, Metis also gave birth to Athena within the body of Zeus having been devoured by him. See Hesiod, *Theogony* 887-901. Penia, whose name means poverty, is the opposite of Poros, whose name means resource. In Aristophanes’ *Wealth*, the opposite of Penia is Plutus, who is “wealth.” See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 194-5.

⁶⁹⁷ Here, Diotima emphasizes the fact that there was not yet wine, which suggests that the birth of Eros takes place before the birth of Dionysus. In other words, Eros is older than Agathon claims. If Socrates identifies Agathon’s Eros with Dionysus, who is said to have overcome necessity with his poetic powers, then the emphasis on the fact that Eros is older than Dionysus is a return to necessity. See Salman, “Anthropogony and Theogony,” 224.

without a blanket or a bed, sleeping in doorways and along waysides in the open air” (ibid). From his father’s side, Eros gets his courage and skills for trapping “the beautiful and the good” (ibid). As the resourceful son of Poros, he is “a skilled hunter, always weaving devices, desirous of practical wisdom and inventive, philosophizing through all his life, a skilled magician, druggist, sophist” (203d-e).⁶⁹⁸ Like his mother, Eros is impoverished and desirous of good and beautiful things, while it is his father who gives him the strength to pursue the things which he lacks and desires. According to Diotima’s story, Eros is a combination of his parents to the extent that he possesses both their affects and powers.

Like her account of the communicative power of the daemons, Diotima’s story about the birth of Eros does not define his nature or power in relation to death. When she speaks of the nature of Eros as “neither immortal nor mortal,” Diotima in truth tells a riddle about Eros as something that can live, die, and be reborn on the same day (203e). It is also in conjunction to this riddling account of the “lifecycle” of Eros that Diotima presents him as a philosopher, who is “never either without resources nor wealthy, but is in between wisdom and lack of understanding” (ibid). Unlike the gods who are wise and those who are ignorant of their own ignorance, Eros is neither wise like the gods nor ignorant of his own lack of wisdom (204a). As such, Diotima’s riddling remarks can be understood as depictions of the life of the philosopher’s mind, for which it is possible to experience such a “lifecycle” on the same day in a metaphorical sense. The mind lives when it remembers, dies when it forgets, and is reborn whenever it is reminded of what it

⁶⁹⁸ See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 193-4. If Eros was only impoverished and without resources, then he would not have the power or courage to pursue the things that he desires. Penia was able to beget Eros by Poros because Poros had been drunk and asleep.

already knows but had forgotten. According to this interpretation, the gods are immortal or always alive because they always remember and know,⁶⁹⁹ while those who are ignorant of their own ignorance or “amnesia”⁷⁰⁰ are barely alive. Eros the daemonic philosopher, the son of Penia and Poros, is not between the gods and human beings in terms of the durability of his existence. Instead, he is between the two in relation to the possession of wisdom, just as correct opinion is “somewhere between intelligence and lack of understanding” (202a). On the same day, Eros “flourishes and lives, whenever he has resources; and sometimes he dies, but gets to live again through the nature of his father” as he struggles in the pursuit of wisdom (203e). And to the extent that Eros is also one of the daemons, Diotima seems to suggest that the communicative power of the daemons is somehow related to their capacity for philosophizing. Collectively, the daemons can facilitate the communication between the gods and human beings about the “orders and exchanges-for-sacrifices” of the former and the “requests and sacrifices” () of the latter because they are able to identify the natures (the powers and affects) of the various kinds of beings in relation to wisdom or knowledge of the truth.⁷⁰¹ Like Socrates’ suggestion about the philosophical basis of all kinds of divine madness in the *Phaedrus*,⁷⁰² Eros as the love of wisdom is also the common nature of all daemons according to Diotima’s teachings. Eros is one of the daemons, which “are many and of all kinds” (203a), while all daemons—like all kinds of divine madness—are philosophical to varying degrees.

⁶⁹⁹ See *Phaedrus* 246e-247e; Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge, and Discourse*, 66-69.

⁷⁰⁰ See *Phaedrus* 249d-251a.

⁷⁰¹ Like his palinode which aims to purify his censure of *erōs*, all three of Socrates’ prayers in the *Phaedrus* depend on his art of dialectic. See *Phaedrus* 265a-266b; 257a-b, 278a-b, 279b-c. See also *Apology* 28e-29a.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 244a-245b, 249d.

To summarize, the first part of Socrates' recollected speech or the earliest teachings that he had received from Diotima depicts Eros as one of the daemons, whose parents are Penia and Poros. While it is the power of all daemons to facilitate the communication between the gods and human beings, the unyielding pursuit of beauty is the power or action that is characteristic of Eros. When the younger Socrates asks Diotima about the use of Eros for human beings at the beginning of the next part of their conversations, he seems to overlook the usefulness of the daemons' ability to facilitate the communication between the gods and human beings or why it is advantageous to be able to recognize one's own ignorance about the beautiful. The younger Socrates who has just begun his training in erotics, it seems, was unable to appreciate the power and courage of Eros as someone who pursues knowledge of the truth about the highest things. At the same time, the older Socrates has tacitly transformed Eros from a beautiful god who resembles Agathon to an unrelenting beggar who resembles Socrates and his shoeless followers. Socrates offers an ironic depiction of the younger version of himself who does not yet know that he will grow up to resemble Eros, which softens his attack on Agathon, who may or may not recognize the irony of Socrates' transformation or demotion of Eros.⁷⁰³

Since Socrates or the prophetic Diotima has spoken about the nature and deed of Eros, one would think that the speech is now complete. According to Diotima, Eros is a great daemon, the son of Penia and Poros, and an interpreter who can facilitate the communication between the gods and human beings about fulfilling the desires of the

⁷⁰³ See Bacon, "Socrates Crowned," 426-7; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 60; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 192.

latter.⁷⁰⁴ However, when Socrates asks Diotima about the use of Eros for human beings, Diotima does not elaborate on the communication that can take place between the gods and human beings or its boons. Diotima does not offer a summary of her speech which has described the nature and deed of Eros or speak about the usefulness of Eros as such. Instead, she asks Socrates a series of questions about the aim of *erōs* as a human phenomenon. After hearing Socrates' answer that those who love beautiful things desire their possession (204d), Diotima asks him about the result of one's possession of beautiful things. While Socrates is unable to give an answer to this question, he can respond to the same question if "beautiful" is exchanged with "good."⁷⁰⁵ The lover of good things desires their possession, and the possession of good things, Socrates says, will result in happiness (204e). For the young Socrates, those who possess good things will be happy, but they are not necessarily happy if they come into possession of beautiful things. The younger Socrates of Socrates' recollections does not equate the beautiful with the good, nor does he see good things as the only things that are beautiful. Some things, it seems, are beautiful but not good, and there are good things that are not beautiful in the superficial sense.⁷⁰⁶ After Diotima had affirmed his answer as "a complete one" since there are no higher goals for human beings than being happy (205a), Socrates does not raise any questions about Diotima's earlier claim that Eros is "by nature a lover in regard to the beautiful" (203c) or ask Diotima to clarify the relationship

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. *Symposium* 175b-c. Earlier in the evening, Agathon had asked his slaves to serve him and his guest as if they were the masters of the banquet. For Socrates, human beings need to communicate with the gods to fulfill their desires but not vice versa.

⁷⁰⁵ Cf. *Symposium* 218e-219a.

⁷⁰⁶ See Allen, "*Symposium* 199c-201c," 462.

between beauty and goodness.⁷⁰⁷ And when Diotima questions him if *erōs* as the desire for good things or happiness is “common to all” (205a), Socrates simply accepts it as true. Through this brief exchange, Eros the philosophical daemon is subtly replaced by the common desire of all human beings for good things or happiness. However, it is not yet clear how *erōs* as such is useful or advantageous for human beings, since the desire for happiness is not identical to being happy. Moreover, neither of the two speaks of the relations between *erōs* and Eros or how Diotima’s account of *erōs* demonstrates the usefulness of Eros for human beings.

As Diotima now explains, *erōs* as the desire for the possession of good things or happiness is common to all human beings, but “we detach from eros a certain kind of eros and give it the name eros, imposing upon it the name of the whole” (205b). Customarily, the word “lover” only designates a subset of human beings. Since Diotima later says that “those who turn toward it in many other ways, in terms of either money-making, love of gymnastics, or philosophy, are neither said to love nor called lovers” (205d), it is clear that the name “lover” does not customarily refer to the philosophical daemon whom she calls Eros. Moreover, the prophetic Diotima denies that “eros is of a half or of a whole” (205e). Since she defines *erōs* as the love of good things that can contribute to human well-being or happiness, one cannot erotically pursue a part or half of oneself “unless one calls the good one’s own and belonging to oneself, and the bad alien to oneself” (ibid). For Diotima, those who pursue their own half are lovers only insofar as the “half or whole can be presumed to be really good” (ibid). Aside from the

⁷⁰⁷ One could make sense of Diotima’s identification of Eros as a lover of beauty by using a stricter definition of beauty, which declares that only the good is beautiful. The young Socrates did not reject the beauty of superficial things as Diotima does.

pursuit of a beloved who is good or beneficial, the lovers in Diotima's account also pursue wealth, health, and wisdom on the assumption that these are good things that can lead to happiness.

After restating the definition of *erōs* that it is “of the good's being one's own always” (206a), Diotima asks Socrates to identify the serious activity of the lovers who pursue the good (206b). Socrates does not respond by speaking about the ways in which one could pursue the good things mentioned above. Instead, he claims to be unable to answer the question and hopes to resort to Diotima's wisdom. Rather than speaking about the actions one takes to acquire good things, such as exercising, trading, or learning, Diotima says that the serious activity of the lovers is the “bringing to birth in beauty both in terms of the body and in terms of the soul” (ibid). According to Diotima's explanation of this inexplicable claim, the serious activity of all human lovers is the reproduction of oneself to exist beyond one's own limited lifespan as a mortal, for “this thing, pregnancy and bringing to birth, is divine, and it is immortal in the animal that is mortal” (206c). All human beings, Diotima says, are eager to “conceive both in terms of the body and in terms of the soul” and naturally desire to beget when they reach a certain age, which can only take place in beauty (ibid), for “the ugly is unfitting with everything divine, but the beautiful is fitting” (206d).⁷⁰⁸ Contrary to Socrates' earlier claim that *erōs* is “the love of beautiful things” (201e), which had already been transformed into the love and pursuit of good things (204e), Diotima now says that it is in truth the love “of the engendering and bringing to birth in the beautiful” (206e). Instead of the possession of beautiful things, the

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. *Symposium* 193c. Aristophanes, like Eryximachus before him, is silent on the lovers' beauty. For Diotima, it is natural for human beings to love and beget in beauty, but she does not say if procreation as such will necessarily lead to happiness. It is possible that the instinctual and the rational are very dissimilar elements of human nature.

human lovers desire to beget in the presence of the beautiful both in terms of the body and in terms of the soul, and these procreative activities are somehow related to the acquisition of good things or becoming happy. According to Diotima's clarification at the end of her perplexing answer, "engendering is born forever and is immortal as far as that can happen to a mortal being," and since *erōs* is the desire "of the good's always being one's own," it is necessarily the desire or love of immortality as well (207a). It is necessary or natural, Diotima instructs, for human beings "to desire immortality with good" (ibid), although it is not clear if these two things are identical or related.⁷⁰⁹

In addition to these enigmatic teachings, Socrates says, Diotima also asked him about "the cause of this eros and desire" (207a). After the conversations that had already taken place, Diotima wishes to know if Socrates is now able to identify the underlying motivation behind the serious activities of the human lovers as well as "all the beasts...whenever they desire to produce offspring" (ibid). Whenever the beasts desire to reproduce, Diotima notes, they are all "of an erotic disposition, first concerning actual intercourse with one another, then later concerning the nurture of what is generated" (207b). By asking about the cause of the beasts' eroticism in relation to procreation and breeding, Diotima wishes to know why all mortal creatures, including human beings, are "ready to fight to the finish, the weakest against the strongest, for the sake of what they have generated, and to die on their behalf" (ibid). Once again, Socrates claims that he does not know the answer and that it is for this reason that he needs teachers who can tell

⁷⁰⁹ For some scholars, these two goals are continuously related, where the latter is more "immortal" than the former. See Halperin, "Plato and Erotic Reciprocity," 73; Martin Warner, "Love, Self, and Plato's Symposium," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (1979): 331-332. See also, Saxonhouse, "Eros and the Female," 22. However, Diotima makes a particularly strong distinction between the two when she says that the gods, the good and happy beings whom the philosopher wishes to befriend, are immortal in an entirely different manner. See *Symposium* 208a-b. The quest for the good is far more important for the philosophical lover than the pursuit of durability or immortality.

him “the cause of these things as well as the rest that concern erotics” (207c). Socrates, it seems, has either forgotten about the cause or genesis of Eros according to Diotima’s previous teachings or assumes that Eros and *erōs* are dissimilar things. At any rate, Diotima now tells Socrates that the beasts act earnestly about reproduction and rearing for the same reason as human beings,⁷¹⁰ that “the mortal nature seeks as far as possible to be forever and immortal” (207d). All mortal creatures, Diotima reveals, are subject to decay and change, and they are all preserved “not by being absolutely the same forever, as the divine is, but by the fact that which is departing and growing old leaves behind another young thing that is as it was” (208a-b). Through reproduction or the substitution of the old by the new, the mortal “shares in immortality, both body and all the rest; but the immortal has a different way” (208b). It is for the sake of immortality or perpetual life, Diotima says, that “this zeal and eros attend everything” (ibid).

Socrates is amazed by Diotima’s revelations about the serious activity of the lovers (ibid). Since Diotima does not raise any questions about Socrates’ amazement, however, it is difficult to pinpoint its cause. Is Socrates amazed because Diotima has offered a penetrating account of human eroticism, insofar as human beings are a subset of the mortal creatures that take generation and breeding seriously, or is Socrates amazed by the credulity of the mortal creatures that beget in the belief that they can attain immortality through begetting?⁷¹¹ Of course, it is also possible that Socrates is amazed by the distinction that Diotima makes between the mortal and the divine when she says that

⁷¹⁰ As Strauss notes, Diotima’s account of *erōs* is physiological rather than mythological. Taken together, *erōs* consists of both physiological and mythological parts, which parallels the multifariousness of human nature. However, it is not necessarily the case that the physiological is always more reliable or beneficial than the mythological. See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 217

⁷¹¹ See Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 513; Roochnik, “The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse,” 120.

the latter is immortal in a different way. Since Socrates now calls Diotima the “wisest” (208b) and identifies her as one of the “perfect sophists” (208c), he is clearly intrigued by Diotima’s subsequent remarks about the serious pursuits of the human lovers. However, just as it is difficult to identify the cause of Socrates’ amazement, it is also difficult to understand why Diotima is wise or a “perfect sophist”⁷¹² for offering an account of the human pursuit of immortality in conjunction to the revelation about the serious pursuit of all mortal lovers. According to Diotima, human lovers who are pregnant in terms of the body turn to the “procreation of children,” furnishing for themselves “immortality, remembrance, and happiness [as they believe] for all future time” (208e), while those who are pregnant in terms of the soul beget “prudence and the rest of virtue” (209a) to supply themselves “with immortal fame and memory” (209d). It is here that Diotima lists the famous heroes who had sacrificed their lives for “an immortal remembering of their virtue” (208d), followed by the famous poets and lawgivers who have left behind their famous “speeches about virtue” (209c). By giving birth to these “children” of the soul which live on in the form of speeches, Diotima says, these remarkable human beings, like those who beget in terms of the body, have also attained the kind of immortality that is available to all mortal creatures.

In contradistinction to her account of Eros, who is between the gods and mortals in terms of the possession of wisdom, Diotima does not depict *erōs* as such an intermediary being. Instead, *erōs* is defined as the common desire of all human beings for the perpetual possession of good things or happiness, and the manifestation of *erōs* as

⁷¹² In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates calls Pericles the most perfect orator in existence who has learned about the mind and the lack of mind from Anaxagoras. This Pericles, moreover, is a practitioner of the art of dialectic. See *Phaedrus* 269a-270a.

such is the same for all mortal creatures. Just as the beasts beget to have a share in immortality, human beings also procreate or create to the same end. Like all the other beasts, human beings also beget in response to the impermanence of mortal life. Although *erōs* or the desire for the perpetual possession of good things or happiness necessarily manifests itself in the pursuit of immortality or perpetual life, it is not necessary for the mortal creatures that pursue immortality as such to communicate with the gods about the human desires, i.e., the things that human beings need to possess in order to become happy and how to acquire them. In other words, *erōs* is not necessarily guided by the observation that one lacks (and needs) knowledge of the truth about the highest things; it is not necessarily inspired by Eros. According to Diotima's speech thus far, the serious activity of the human lovers is driven by a natural or physiological defect that is common to all mortal creatures.⁷¹³ Put differently, the "intermediacy" of *erōs* as such is "existential" as opposed to "logical."

And in contrast to her earlier observations about the variedness of the lovers' pursuits of happiness (205d), Diotima now identifies the pursuit of immortality—the serious activity of all mortal creatures—as the basic impetus of all human lovers. However, Diotima does not say that the attainment of immortality as such allows mankind to become happy. Although she says that the famous human beings have been successful in their pursuits of immortality or undying fame, she does not say that they are happy or immortal as the gods are. At most, these famous human beings are as happy or immortal as the other beasts are, insofar as the other beasts have also been successful

⁷¹³ Cf. *Symposium* 186a. Like Eryximachus, Diotima also offers an extensive conception of *erōs*. However, the object of love as such is not one that the physicians could deliver. As such, Socrates' Diotima challenges Eryximachus' claim to know about erotics.

procreators who continue to exist beyond their own lifespan. Moreover, as David Roochnik notes in his discussion of this part of Socrates' speech, "nothing stated so far requires any ontological commitment."⁷¹⁴ Diotima has merely offered a physiological account of the seriousness of procreation (and breeding) for all mortal creatures that are predisposed toward existence or life rather than non-existence or death. She has not said that perpetual life—in whatever form—is unqualifiedly good or that immortality as such is identical to divinity. Indeed, Diotima seems to suggest that procreation is not itself beautiful (or good) by saying that it is fitting for mortal creatures to beget only in the presence of beauty (206b)⁷¹⁵ or that "Kallone [Beauty] is the Moira [Fate] and Eileithyia for birth" (206d).⁷¹⁶ Whatever the beautiful is, it is distinct from the activity of procreation, which according to Diotima's speech thus far is merely a "god-loving" activity that is chiefly motivated by the dreadful transience of mortal life. It remains for her (and Socrates) to elaborate on the things that render procreation or engendering—both in terms of the body and in terms of the soul—into some activity that is especially suited to human beings.

According to Leo Strauss, the final part of Diotima's speech which turns to the "correct practice of pederasty" (211b) is the third subsection of the third part of Socrates' speech, one that describes the serious activities of the various kinds of human lovers.⁷¹⁷ While this is certainly the most sensible division of Socrates' speech, the similarities between this subsection of his speech and the earlier discussion about the

⁷¹⁴ Roochnik, "The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse," 119.

⁷¹⁵ For an explanation of the meaning of *τόκος ἐν καλῷ*, see Dover, *Symposium*, 148. As Dover notes, beauty is the medium of one's erotic procreation. Cf. E. E. Pender, "Spiritual Pregnancy in Plato's Symposium," *The Classical Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1992): 72-86.

⁷¹⁶ Eileithyia, the daughter of Hera and Zeus, is the goddess of midwifery who delayed the birth of Heracles. See *Theaetetus* 149a-151e.

⁷¹⁷ Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 183.

nature and deed of Eros as a philosophical daemon suggests that it can also be seen as a part of the larger demonstration of the use of Eros for human beings.⁷¹⁸ Put differently, Diotima's account of the serious activity of the philosophical lover in the final subsection of the third part of her speech belongs to the various superimposed parts of Socrates' praise of Eros. To demonstrate to Socrates the usefulness of Eros for human beings, Diotima juxtaposes the serious activities of the various kinds of human lovers without an explicit account of the relations or differences between their objects of desire. The praiseworthiness of Eros as a philosophical daemon, as it were, can only be effectively demonstrated through such an elaborate juxtaposition of the various kinds of lovers and their pursuits. By placing the "perfect revelations" (210a) of erotics at the end of her speech, Socrates' Diotima completes her account of the serious activities of the human lovers, and insofar as the audience of this part of Socrates' speech examines the relations between its various subparts and how it is related to the other parts of the same speech in a dialectical manner,⁷¹⁹ it also effectively demonstrates the usefulness (or goodness) of philosophy (or Eros) for human beings.

In the final subsection of Socrates' recollected speech, Diotima continues to speak about the serious activity of human lovers. But unlike her preceding account of *erōs* which is applicable to all mortal creatures, these obscure teachings of erotics are restricted to the "real man" (212b). According to Diotima, the initiands of these teachings about *erōs* must begin at a young age and "love one body and there generate beautiful speeches" (210a). During this early stage of his training, the beauty of the speeches that

⁷¹⁸ Diotima's demonstration of the use of Eros for human beings begins at 204c, which ends with Socrates' conclusions about the power and courage of Eros at 212b.

⁷¹⁹ See *Phaedrus* 264c, 266b, 270c-d.

are generated by this lover, like the beauty of his beloved, can be identified as the superficial beauty of appearances. Like the other human lovers, the philosophical lover also wishes to beget in the presence of beauty, and his initial understanding of beauty is overwhelmed by sense-perception. Here, Diotima says, the philosophical lover must realize that the beauty of the body is the same in all bodies, and that it is petty to be seriously committed to one beautiful body insofar as he is a lover of “the beauty of looks” (210b). After this realization about the identity of the beauty of the body, moreover, the philosophical lover must be led to honour the beauty of the soul more than the beauty of the body, and when he has found such a beautiful soul, even if it “has only a slight youthful charm...love and cherish him, and engender and seek such speeches as will make the young better” (210c). Instead of trying to make his beautiful beloved more beautiful in terms of the body,⁷²⁰ Diotima instructs, this lover must be led to improve the soul of the beloved with speeches, and it is because of this task that he is “compelled to behold the beautiful in pursuits and laws” (ibid). During his studies about the beauty of these things, he will come to realize that “the beauty of the body is something trivial” (ibid). It is by beholding the beauty of pursuits and laws that this lover learns to appreciate the beauty of the soul or why it is correct to have been led to hold the beauty of the soul in greater honour. To improve the soul of his beloved, he will then depart from the laws and pursuits and lead his beloved “on to the sciences, so that he [himself, the lover] may see the beauty of sciences” (ibid). Unlike the preceding stages of his education, the philosophical lover is not led by his teacher when he discovers the beauty of the sciences; he is compelled to study the sciences because he wishes to improve the

⁷²⁰ Cf. *Phaedrus* 238e-239b.

soul of his beloved or make it more beautiful in terms of wisdom. Like the beauty of pursuits and laws, the beauty of the sciences is not identifiable with the beauty of the body. Rather, the sciences are beautiful in the same way that wisdom is beautiful. They are beautiful or pleasant to behold because they are good or beneficial for human beings.

As many scholars have noted, Diotima's account of the education of the philosophical lover is teleological and hierarchically organized.⁷²¹ Like climbing a ladder or a flight of stairs,⁷²² the philosophical lover progresses from one stage to the next in the hopes of attaining his goal. In the process, he is gradually liberated from the unreliable conceptions of the beautiful that he had previously held, and near the end of his education, he will be no longer content with "the beauty in one, of a boy, of some human being, or of one practice, nor be a sorry sort of slave and petty calculator" (210d). Instead, he will turn to "the vast open sea of the beautiful, behold it and give birth—in ungrudging philosophy—to many beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts" (ibid). It is by leading the philosopher's way of life, learning and examining the beauty of the sciences, Diotima says, that the philosophical lover will become prepared for the final ascent. According to Diotima, the "perfect end of erotics...for whose sake alone all the prior labors were undertaken" (210e-211a) is knowledge of the truth about "beauty itself" (211c), something that is not affected by any kind of motion or change but "is alone by itself and with itself, always being of a single form" (211b). Unlike "all other beautiful things that share in it" that "do come to be and perish" (ibid), the kind of beauty that the philosophical lover desires to behold is immutable and imperishable. It is when the

⁷²¹ For notable examples, see Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 521-2; Julius M. E. Moravcsik, "Reason and Eros in the Ascent Passage of the *Symposium*," *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter* 41 (1960): 1-12.

⁷²² See Bloom, "The Ladder of Love," 514-524; Duque, "Reorientation of Imperialistic Erōs," 104-6.

philosophical lover has attained this knowledge, “at this place in life, in beholding the beautiful itself” (211d), Diotima says, that human life becomes worth living.⁷²³ Life, she says, cannot be “a sorry sort of thing, when a human being gazes in the direction of the beautiful and beholds it with the instrument with which he must and is together with it” (ibid). Moreover, it is only when the mind of the philosophical lover has beheld beauty as such, Diotima asserts, that he will be able to beget “not phantom images of virtue...but...true virtue” (212a), and that it is by begetting speeches about virtue as such that “it lies within him to become dear to god and, if it is possible for any human being, to become immortal as well” (ibid).

In contrast to her preceding account of the serious activities of mortal lovers, Diotima does not identify immortality or perpetual life as the goal of the philosophical lover. Although the philosophical lover is also a mortal who necessarily desires immortality in response to the transience of mortal life, it is not immortality as such that makes his life worth living. Instead of immortality or perpetual life, the goal of the philosophical lover is knowledge of the truth about the beautiful, which is “immortal” because it is not affected by motion or change.⁷²⁴ Unlike the kind of immortality that is attained by means of engendering, either in terms of the body or the soul, the

⁷²³ Benardete argues that *erōs* is eliminated once the philosophical lover accomplishes his goal, as “in the ascent of eros, as soon as the lover passes beyond human beings and contemplates the beauty in laws and practices, he ceases to be a lover and becomes solely a spectator.” Benardete, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 87. For a comparable critique of Socrates’ “unerotic” speech, see Marina Marren, “Ascent to the *Autò tò Kalón* in Plato’s *Symposium* 204a-212d,” in *Looking at Beauty to Kalon in Western Greece: Selected Essays from the 2018 Symposium on the Heritage of Western Greece*, edited by Heather L. Reid and Tony Leyh (Fonte Aretusa: Parnassos Press, 2019), 144-7. However, it is highly questionable that the philosophical lover, whose nature resembles that of Eros, the son of Penia and Poros, could ever become some godlike being that could always contemplate or behold beauty as such with ease. For interpretations that are similar to mine, which argues that the philosophical lover never becomes “unerotic” at any stage of his education, see Duque, “Reorientation of Imperialistic *Erōs*,” 103-6; Roochnik, “The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse,” 127.

⁷²⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 245c-246a, 247c-e.

philosophical lover pursues something that is “immortal” in a fundamentally different way. Just as the divine is “absolutely the same forever” (208a), the kind of beauty that the philosophical lover desires and pursues is the unchanging idea of beauty itself, which can be grasped in terms of the experience of moral excellence.⁷²⁵ Unlike the beautiful things that can be perceived by means of the bodily senses, this kind of beauty is “pure, clean, unmixed, and not infected with human flesh, colors, or a lot of other mortal foolishness” (211e). And instead of acting on the bodily senses, beauty as such can only be grasped by the mind of the philosophical lover who has examined the beauty (or goodness) of many things over the course of his life. In short, Diotima’s highest teachings of erotics replaces immortality or perpetual life with the immutable idea of the good⁷²⁶ as the object of the lover’s desire.

In many ways, Diotima’s account of the education of the philosophical lover reminds of her earlier account of the nature and deed of Eros, the philosophical daemon who is the son of Penia and Poros. Most importantly, Eros and this kind of human lover are both philosophers who desire and pursue wisdom, which Diotima identifies as “one of the most beautiful things” (240b). While the philosophical lover is a human being and is not the product of the union of two divine beings, his unrelenting pursuit of knowledge of the truth about the beautiful suggests that he is also aware of his own lack of wisdom. Like Eros, the human lover of wisdom also pursues a beloved thing that is “truly beautiful, delicate, perfect, and most blessed” (204c). In other words, the human lover of wisdom who pursues the divine sort of beauty can be identified as a daemonic individual

⁷²⁵ For helpful discussions of the “idea” of beauty, see Cherniss, “The Philosophical Economy,” 449-452; Strauss, “*On Plato’s Symposium*,” 234-6.

⁷²⁶ As Strauss notes, “the beautiful itself is the good.” Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 238. See also White, “Love and Beauty,” 154.

who closely resembles Eros, the daemon who is characterized by his love and pursuit of beauty. Unlike the other human lovers who pursue immortality on the assumption or calculation (207c)⁷²⁷ that divinity is identical to perpetual life, the philosophical lovers, both daemonic and human, pursue knowledge of the truth about the beautiful because they possess correct opinions about their own lack of knowledge or wisdom about the highest things. It is not the transience of mortal life that motivates the philosophical lover to examine the beautiful things that he finds in life. Rather, he takes philosophizing seriously because it is the only way to confront his own limitations as a human being, i.e., a mortal creature that loves and pursues happiness but is susceptible to the influence of beautiful or well-adorned speeches that might be less reliable than they seem.

In sum, Socrates' speech displays Diotima's disparate teachings about *erōs* or the human desire for the possession of good things or happiness. While Diotima strongly endorses the philosopher's love and pursuit of wisdom, neither she nor Socrates displays a simple or unambiguous praise of *erōs* as such. Instead, both Socrates and his Diotima juxtaposes the daemonic or "Erotic" kind of love with the serious pursuits of the other human lovers, which can be identified with the mortals' love and pursuit of immortality. Like Diotima, Socrates assimilates the philosopher's love of wisdom to the serious activity of all mortal creatures who by nature desire and pursue immortality or perpetual life. However, if one highlights the distinction that Diotima makes between the immortality that is accessible to all mortal creatures and the immutability of the truly divine or beautiful thing that is said to be accessible to the human mind, one sees that the philosopher's love and pursuit of wisdom is remarkably different from the serious

⁷²⁷ See also *Phaedrus* 256e.

pursuits of the other lovers. By displaying such an elaborate speech to Socrates, Diotima compels Socrates to examine for himself the various kinds of *erōs* and the various activities of the human lovers who seek to acquire good things or happiness, that is, an activity of the mind that is identical to the training that is received by the philosophical lover who is to be initiated into the “perfect revelations” of erotics.⁷²⁸ And by displaying these elaborate teachings that he had received from Diotima in such an “unabridged” manner, Socrates also compels his audience to examine the various parts of his speech as the philosopher would. To effectively demonstrate the usefulness of Eros or the praiseworthiness of the pursuits of the philosophical lover who resembles Eros, Plato’s Socrates, like Socrates’ Diotima, speaks in a way that could facilitate “the serious pursuit”⁷²⁹ of philosophy.

As Socrates shows in the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, his “chance utterances” about *erōs* in that dialogue “involved two principles, the essence of which it would be gratifying to learn, if art could teach it.”⁷³⁰ Likewise, Socrates’ speech about *erōs* in the *Symposium* also uses and facilitates the art of thinking that he calls dialectic, which can be defined as the two processes of collection and division. In both dialogues, Socrates characterizes *erōs* as a complex phenomenon that affect human beings in a variety of ways, resulting in a wide range of beliefs and actions that may or may not be beneficial. Unlike the speech contest in the *Phaedrus*, however, Socrates the symposiast is not compelled to censure *erōs* as if it were a disease.⁷³¹ Here in the *Symposium*, Socrates the symposiast only speaks about the beautiful parts of the truth about *erōs*

⁷²⁸ See *Phaedrus* 253c.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, 278d.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, 265d.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, 265a.

(198d), hence he is silent on the hubristic or harmful kind of *erōs* which he had exposed and censured in the *Phaedrus*. Instead of identifying the various kinds of *erōs* with the various kinds of madness that are either beneficial or harmful, Socrates the symposiast defines or collects *erōs* as the pursuit of happiness that is common to all human beings.⁷³² Socrates does not speak with malice when his Diotima identifies the serious pursuits of most human lovers with the serious pursuits of the other beasts. Rather, the identification of the human beings with all other beasts serves as a reminder of the complexity of human nature and human eroticism, which is possible only if one also recognizes mankind's capacity for philosophizing. Put differently, Socrates' "disorganized" speech in the *Symposium*, like his "chance utterances" in the *Phaedrus*, is organized in a way that allows the audience to examine the phenomenon of *erōs* in a dialectical or philosophical manner. At the same time, much of what Socrates accomplishes in his elaborate speech in the *Symposium*—like his speech about *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*—remains concealed unless it is compared to the speeches of the other speakers, that is, the other parts of Plato's philosophical writing. What is the philosopher's conception of *erōs* and why is the philosopher's love of wisdom praiseworthy, contrary to what the poets would have us believe?

B. Socrates' conception of *erōs*

Like Agathon, Socrates also assimilates Eros to himself in his speech.⁷³³ But unlike Agathon's Eros, an all-powerful god who is not affected by anything or anyone (196b), Socrates' Eros is a penurious daemon who lacks and pursues beauty. As such,

⁷³² See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 240. As Strauss notes, "what is taking place is a purification of eros, and we can, perhaps, say that the task of the *Symposium* as a whole is the purification, the catharsis, of eros."

⁷³³ See Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 67.

Socrates' assimilation of Eros is not premised on his own apotheosis,⁷³⁴ but the demotion of Eros from a god to an intermediary being who is between the gods and human beings in terms of the possession of wisdom or happiness. Unlike Agathon, Socrates does not praise himself as if he were an equal to the gods who are beautiful and happy, but only as someone who knows that he lacks and longs for the divine wisdom that would make him happy. Like Eros, Socrates knows the truth about his own nature and desires.⁷³⁵ And rather than an all-powerful being who is able to charm everyone with his beauty, Socrates' Eros is powerful only insofar as he is able to question the preeminent teachings about the good or the beautiful,⁷³⁶ insofar as these teachings about the highest things, such as the poets' accounts of the best way of life for human beings, are often unreliable or harmful.

At the same time, Eros or the philosopher's love of wisdom is not the only kind of erotic pursuit that Diotima discusses in Socrates' recollected speech. Unlike Aristophanes who identifies the lovers' mutual embrace as the sole pursuit of all human beings regardless of genealogy, Diotima speaks of many different pursuits of the human lovers. Although she identifies happiness or the possession of good things as the common goal of all human beings (205a), Diotima does not identify philosophy as the only path that is taken in the pursuit of this goal. In other words, Diotima does not identify philosophical *erōs* as the essential characteristic of human nature or the only kind of human eroticism. Instead, she offers an elaborate account of human nature where mortal instincts coexist

⁷³⁴ Cf. *Phaedrus* 245b-249d. In the *Phaedrus*, the souls of human beings are said to be immortal because they are capable of self-motion. Yet despite their immortality, the human souls are not "all good and of good descent" (246a-b).

⁷³⁵ Cf. *Phaedrus* 230a. See also Roochnik, "The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse," 128.

⁷³⁶ Cf. *Phaedrus* 246e. Here, Socrates says that "the divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness, and all such qualities."

with the higher aspirations of the human mind. On the one hand, human beings are mortal creatures that instinctively strive to become immortal through the begetting of children, either in terms of the body or the soul. On the other hand, they are also distinct from the other mortal creatures because of their ability to examine the beauty (or goodness) of various things and pursuits, which entails the existence of an immutable idea of the good that is accessible to the human mind. According to Diotima, the sight of this immutable beauty is the highest aspiration of the human mind,⁷³⁷ and it is the sight of this beauty that motivates the philosopher's examinations of apparently beautiful things and the preeminent teachings about them. In other words, human beings are both "existential" and "logical" creatures that are affected by both beastly and daemonic impulses that lead to all kinds of actions and pursuits which may or may not lead to the attainment of happiness. However, it is only the latter kind of impulse or affection of the mind that goads one to examine one's own nature and pursuits as a mortal creature who is so distant and distinct from the gods.

Indeed, Socrates also offers an elaborate account of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus*, and the two accounts of philosophical love are identical in several important respects. In his first speech in that dialogue, Socrates was compelled to censure *erōs* as a hubristic form of madness according to Phaedrus' requests.⁷³⁸ According to this speech, the pleasures of the beauty of the body either overwhelms one's "acquired opinions which strive for the best"⁷³⁹ or is subdued by them. When someone is overwhelmed by his desires for such pleasures, Socrates says, he becomes "a slave to pleasure" and will harm his beloved by

⁷³⁷ Cf. *Phaedrus* 247c-248b.

⁷³⁸ *Phaedrus* 236a-b.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 237d-e.

making his beloved “as pleasing to himself as possible” (ibid 238e). To recant this speech which had failed to consider a more “generous” kind of love (243c), Socrates produces in his second speech an elaborate image of the human soul which is said to travel across multiple planes of existence over long periods of time (245c-248e). Here, the binary impulses or principles of human action are transfigured into the two horses of the soul-chariot, reined in by the charioteer or the mind (247c). According to Socrates’ second speech, *erōs* or erotic madness should be praised rather than censured because hubris or the rule of bodily pleasure is not the only kind of madness. Unlike the hubristic kind of lover whose madness is identical with some disease of the body (265a), the madness of the philosophical lover, as Socrates shows through his elaborate image of the soul, is caused by his recollection of the true beauty that he had seen upon the “plain of truth” (248b). As such, his erotic madness does not compel him to make his beloved into an object of bodily gratification but to fashion and adorn the beloved “as though he were his god” (252d). The adornment of the beloved facilitates the lover’s examination and recollection of true beauty and turns the beloved himself into a lover of beauty as such (255c-d). This kind of love, Socrates argues, is beneficial to both the lover and his beloved because it motivates their intellectual and moral growth. At the same time, not all human beings are familiar with this kind of love, Socrates says, because not everyone has a clear recollection of the true beauty that they had once seen. According to Socrates’ image, a great many souls had failed to attain a full view of the hyperuranian truths as the heavens rotated on its own axis (247c-248e). As such, it is difficult “to gain from earthly things a recollection of those realities, either for those which had but a brief view of them at that earlier time, or for those which, after falling to earth, were so unfortunate as to be

turned toward unrighteousness through some evil communications and to have forgotten the holy sights they once saw” (249e-250a). When someone has forgotten the true beauty that he had once saw in “the fitting pasturage for the best part of the soul” (248b), he will be unable to “rise from this world to that other world and to absolute beauty when he sees its namesake here...but gives himself up to pleasure and like a beast proceeds to lust and begetting...makes license his companion and is not afraid or ashamed to pursue pleasure in violation of nature” (250e-251a).

In both dialogues, Socrates offers a speech that depicts *erōs* as a complex phenomenon that reflects the complexity or multiformity of human nature. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates offers an elaborate image of the human soul to capture both the highest aspiration of the human mind and the obstacles that hinder us from it. In the *Symposium*, Socrates’ Diotima also offers an elaborate or variegated account of *erōs*, but instead of making a sharp distinction between the philosophical and the non-philosophical kinds of *erōs*, she assimilates mankind’s instinctual pursuit of immortality into the philosopher’s pursuit of the divine. In both speeches, the philosopher’s love of wisdom is distinguished from the other kinds of human eroticisms, although the emphasis of the speeches varies according to the dramatic circumstance. At Agathon’s celebratory party, Socrates speaks through the voice of his foreign (and female) teacher and is far more subtle in his criticism of the non-philosopher’s erotic pursuits, which is also identified with the erotic pursuits of the other beasts in the *Phaedrus*.

In addition to the multiformity of *erōs*, Socrates also offers similar accounts of philosophical *erōs* in both of his speeches, both in terms of the goal of philosophy and the journey that is taken to pursue this goal. In both speeches, Socrates identifies the sight of

the immutable idea of the good—the truly beautiful sight that nourishes the human mind—as the ultimate goal of philosophy. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates locates this sight in “the region above the heaven,” where the mind or “the pilot of the soul” beholds “justice, temperance, and knowledge, not such knowledge as has a beginning and varies as it is associated with one another of the things we call realities, but that which abides in the real eternal absolute” (247d-e). According to this speech, the philosopher’s recollections of these beautiful realities allow him to recognize the distance and difference between the apparently beautiful things that he sees and beauty as such. In his attempt to adorn the beloved as if the beloved were the god that he follows, the philosophical lover also nourishes his own soul as he is compelled to keep his “eyes fixed upon the god...and grasp him by memory...and receive from him character and habits” (253a). In the *Symposium*, Diotima also identifies the sight of the immutable idea of the good or “the divine beautiful itself as being of a single shape”⁷⁴⁰ as the goal of the philosophical lover who resembles Eros. Because he “lays hold of the true,” Diotima says, the philosophical lover will be able to beget and cherish “true virtue.”⁷⁴¹ According to both of Socrates’ speeches, the philosophical lover pursues his goal through the benefaction of his beautiful beloved, and to adorn the beloved with the true virtues, the philosophical lover must recognize the insufficiency of the kind of beauty that he sees with his eyes and the need for the kind of beauty that is only visible to his mind. In both speeches, the philosophical lover loves or benefits his beloved (and himself) through philosophical conversations which question the praiseworthiness of things that are apparently beautiful or good.

C. Socrates’ praise of Eros

⁷⁴⁰ *Symposium* 211e.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 212a.

Near the end of his speech in the *Symposium*, Socrates says he is persuaded by Diotima that to get a sight of the immutable idea of the good “one could not easily get a better co-worker with human nature than Eros,” and that he “now and always eulogize the power and courage of Eros” to the extent of his abilities (ibid 212b). Yet for much of his recollected speech, Socrates’ Diotima does not speak about Eros or the philosopher’s pursuit of true beauty. If Socrates had simply wished to praise Eros or the philosopher’s way of life, then why does he deliver a speech that is also preoccupied with the phenomenon of *erōs* as a human or mortal instinct? How does Socrates praise the power and courage of Eros by displaying Diotima’s diverse teachings about *erōs*?

In short, Socrates demonstrates the power and courage of Eros as a philosophical daemon by displaying a speech about *erōs* that could facilitate the philosopher’s art of thinking. As Socrates says at the very beginning of his speech, he will eulogize Eros by “selecting the most beautiful parts of the truth” and arranging them “in the seemliest manner possible” (198d). To effectively demonstrate the praiseworthiness of the philosopher’s love and pursuit of wisdom, Socrates must speak in a way that could allow his audience to reflect on the phenomenon of *erōs* as the philosopher would.⁷⁴² In other words, Socrates’ Diotima demonstrates the usefulness of Eros for human beings by offering a variegated account of *erōs* in relation to the multiformity of human nature, which allows Socrates to reflect on the phenomenon of *erōs* in a philosophical manner. And by displaying Diotima’s diverse teachings about *erōs*, Socrates seeks to persuade his

⁷⁴² See *Phaedrus* 270d. “In considering the nature of anything, must we not consider first, whether that in respect to which we wish to be leaned ourselves and to make others learned is simple or multiform, and then, if it is simple, enquire what power of acting it possesses, or of being acted upon, and by what, and if it has many forms, number them, and then see in the case of each form, as we did in the case of the simple nature, what its action is and how it is acted upon and by what?”

own audience as he was persuaded by Diotima. Of course, it is unclear if anyone at Agathon's party can make sense of Socrates' elaborate speech in the appropriate or fitting manner,⁷⁴³ which requires the recipient of the speech to figure out the relations between its various parts and its actions upon the previous speeches.⁷⁴⁴ Yet it is only when the audience of Socrates' speech has examined for themselves the moral worth or beauty of the various kinds of *erōs* that Diotima's account of the "correct practice of pederasty" begins to make sense. To be persuaded by Socrates or Socrates' Diotima of the praiseworthiness of the philosopher's love and pursuit of wisdom, one has to examine one's own affections or desires as a human being and the various paths that are taken to satisfy those desires, which necessarily entails the dialectic of *erōs*.⁷⁴⁵ As such, Socrates' praise of Eros as a philosophical daemon in the *Symposium* is analogous to his praise of *erōs* as philosophical madness in the *Phaedrus*, where he also displays through speech the various kinds of eroticisms and their various ends in juxtaposition. In both dialogues, Socrates praises the philosopher's love of wisdom according to his own insights about the artful speeches of the philosopher, who acquires his name not from the speeches that he composes, "but from the serious pursuit which underlies them."⁷⁴⁶

Therefore, Socrates' praise of *erōs* uses and facilitates the same art of thinking that underlies Plato's philosophical writings. Like his Socrates' elaborate speeches about *erōs* which Socrates attributes to others,⁷⁴⁷ both of Plato's dialogues display others'

⁷⁴³ Ibid., 275c-d, 276a.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., 264b-c, 276e-277c.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., 229e-230a. See also Moore, "How to 'Know Thyself'," 406-413.

⁷⁴⁶ *Phaedrus* 278c-d.

⁷⁴⁷ While Socrates attributes the palinode to Stesichorus, his censure of *erōs* displays (or exposes) Lysias' deception of Phaedrus. See *Phaedrus* 243a. The mythopoetic speech "by Stesichorus" greatly differs from the more prosaic speeches by "Lysias" and "Diotima."

speeches about *erōs*. Like his Socrates, Plato also displays rhetoric about *erōs* instead of offering his own unambiguous teachings about what *erōs* is and why it is worthy of praise or blame. As Socrates discloses in the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, the serious maker of speeches who wish to speak or write according to the dictates of art must reckon with the fact that one's speeches can only "remind him who knows the matter about which they are written."⁷⁴⁸ To praise the philosopher's love and pursuit of wisdom, therefore, both Socrates and Plato must speak or write in a way that could facilitate in the mind of the audience the philosopher's art of thinking which Socrates calls the art of dialectic. Only then can the philosopher's serious and artful writings "make their possessor happy, to the farthest possible limit of human happiness,"⁷⁴⁹ that is, a kind of happiness that is premised on the examination of the happiness that is apparently enjoyed by the famous poets and lawgivers who have attained undying fame. Put differently, by displaying his Socrates' display of rhetoric about *erōs* in juxtaposition with the other speeches about *erōs*, Plato imitates his Socrates' art of philosophical speech and accomplishes through writing what his Socrates sought to accomplish through speaking.⁷⁵⁰

VIII. Alcibiades' speech

According to Apollodorus, some of the symposiasts had praised Socrates' elaborate speech (212c), although he does not say who had praised it and why. When Aristophanes sought to comment on Socrates' speech, that it reminded him of things that

⁷⁴⁸ *Phaedrus*, 275d.

⁷⁴⁹ *Phaedrus* 277a

⁷⁵⁰ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 245-6. As Strauss correctly notes, Plato's Socrates did not write because he was purely concerned with beauty, not immortality. Plato's writings imitate and reanimate his Socrates' pursuit of beauty or the good, and they will continue to live on only if their readers are able to imitate his Socrates in that pursuit, that is, as philosophical thinkers that engage in the business of dialectic.

he himself had said in his own speech, a rambunctious mob gathers in front of Agathon's porch to be let in. For a second time, Aristophanes is forced to be silent.⁷⁵¹ Like Socrates, Alcibiades also did not attend Agathon's victory celebration the night before and he arrives now in the arms of revelers—quite drunk and quite late—to crown the victorious tragedian. As many scholars have noted, the drunken Alcibiades reminds of Dionysus, the god of theatre and wine.⁷⁵² Since Agathon had said that he would have a contest of wisdom with Socrates with Dionysus as their judge (175e), it is fitting for such an iconic Dionysian character to declare the results of their contest. It is as Alcibiades himself says, he comes to wreath “the head of the wisest and the most beautiful” (212e). When Alcibiades does arrive at the party, however, both Agathon and Socrates had already spoken, thus Alcibiades can only judge their contest on the basis of what he had heard and experienced in previous times. As such, Alcibiades' judgement is not based on what he could have heard if he had not been preoccupied with the bodily pleasures.

Because he had blindfolded himself trying to take the ribbons off his own head to wreath Agathon, Alcibiades did not see Socrates as he was being led to sit beside the triumphant poet. When Alcibiades finally discovers that Socrates is sitting right next to him, the contest of wisdom between the poet and the philosopher is quickly eclipsed by the quarrel between Alcibiades and Socrates as lovers. In response to Alcibiades' taunts that Socrates is always lying in ambush for him and stalking the beauties (213c), Socrates asks Agathon to reconcile them and defend him if Alcibiades turns violent (213d). In accordance with Glaucon's inquiries at the beginning of the dialogue, the three figures

⁷⁵¹ See *Symposium* 185c-d. Aristophanes is silenced by both Pausanias' censure of the lower things and a multitude that is enraptured by them.

⁷⁵² See Benardete, *On Plato's Symposium*, 91; Dover, *Plato: Symposium*, 160; Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 70-2.

who now sit on the last couch constitute the focal point of the whole event (172a-b). There is Socrates, his beloved-lover Alcibiades, and the beautiful tragedian whose name is “good,” forming a kind of “love-triangle” where both Socrates and Alcibiades are trying to befriend the young poet. There is to be no reconciliation between the two of them, Alcibiades says, before asking Agathon to give him some of the ribbons so he could crown Socrates as well, “for he conquers all human beings in speeches... at all times” (213e). Alcibiades wreathes both the tragedian and the philosopher not knowing what had transpired earlier that evening, just as he had failed to see Socrates when he was being led to Agathon.⁷⁵³ When Eryximachus tells Alcibiades that they had spent the night praising Eros and that he should also participate in their speech contest, Alcibiades takes the opportunity to refute Socrates’ claim that he was the jealous and violent one in their relationship. If he should praise anyone other than Socrates, Alcibiades says, it is Socrates who will act violently against him and not the other way around. Instead of praising Eros, Alcibiades will praise Socrates and take vengeance on him by telling the truth.

According to Alcibiades’ speech, Socrates resembles the carved silenuses that can be opened up if they are “split in two” (215b) and Marsyas, the satyr who challenged the musical authority of Apollo and was flayed by the god when he lost the contest.⁷⁵⁴ Through these images, Alcibiades tells the truth about Socrates as a lover from a beloved’s point of view.⁷⁵⁵ Like Apollo, Alcibiades jealously “flays” Socrates or splits

⁷⁵³ In other words, Alcibiades was not led by Socrates in his blind pursuit of the “good.” Cf. Gagarin, “Socrates’ ‘Hybris,’” 34.

⁷⁵⁴ See Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.4.2.

⁷⁵⁵ See Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 528.

him into halves to expose that which hidden within.⁷⁵⁶ Beneath his apparent eroticism, Alcibiades says by way of his Dionysian images, Socrates is in truth not erotic at all, as “all his life he keeps on being ironical and playful to human beings” (216e). And far from being the ignorant man that Socrates claims to be, Alcibiades identifies Socrates as a knower who speaks and acts with prudence. Alcibiades’ Socrates is a powerful siren who is able to seduce his “beloveds” and make them into his own lovers (222b). In light of Socrates’ own speech about the nature of philosophical *erōs* which Alcibiades had failed to hear, Alcibiades’ exposition of the truth about Socrates shows that there is much that he does not know about his lover. Most importantly, Alcibiades is ignorant of the philosopher’s desire to possess knowledge of the truth about the highest or the most beautiful things and the dialectical action of philosophy as such. Put differently, the truth about Socrates as a philosophical lover eludes Alcibiades⁷⁵⁷ because he fails to grasp the importance of the “in between”⁷⁵⁸ and the philosopher’s understanding of “pederasty.”⁷⁵⁹ Because Alcibiades is unable to break free from the opinions of the multitude and the established conventions of Athenian pederasty,⁷⁶⁰ he cannot genuinely reflect on the moral worth of philosophical speeches and must force himself to run away from them lest

⁷⁵⁶ See Mary P. Nichols, “Philosophy and Empire: On Socrates and Alcibiades in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Polity* 39, no. 4 (2007): 515. Rosen identifies Alcibiades as “a Dionysus who, in his intoxication, mistakes himself for an Apollo,” see Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 298.

⁷⁵⁷ See Nichols, *Friendship and Community*, 76.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁹ The meaning of “love of children” necessarily changes according to one’s conception of love.

⁷⁶⁰ See Gagarin, “Socrates’ ‘Hybris,’” 34. As Gagarin correctly notes, “Alcibiades sees himself torn between the attractions of Socrates’ intellectual and moral advice and the force of popular glory.” Cf. Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 265-6, 272. While it is true that Alcibiades’ tyrannical nature allows him to disregard the law, his drunken speech reveals that the affections of his soul are fundamentally “demotic.” See *Republic* 562a. See also, Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” 531.

he should grow old sitting in idleness (216a). Ultimately, Alcibiades' ironic exposition of the truth about Socrates, like Apollo's revenge on the satyr Marsyas, is only skin-deep.⁷⁶¹

A. The aim of Alcibiades' speech

Since Alcibiades does not participate in the foregoing speech contest by offering a eulogy of Eros, the aim of his speech is less clear than the previous speeches. Unlike the other symposiasts, Alcibiades neither adorns Eros as beautifully as he can nor speaks about the beautiful parts of the truth about *erōs*. Instead, Alcibiades says that he will praise his lover Socrates by telling the truth, which is somehow the same as assaulting Socrates and taking vengeance on him (214e). Put differently, Eros as the subject matter of the speeches is transformed from the general to the personal or the particular.⁷⁶² When Alcibiades finishes speaking, Socrates calls Alcibiades' speech a "satyr and silenic drama" (222d) because according to him, Alcibiades had sought to conceal the true intention of the speech by "inserting it at the end" as if it were a "side-issue" (222c). For Socrates, the concealed aim of Alcibiades' speech is to set him and Agathon apart because Alcibiades believes that Socrates should only love him and no one else and that Agathon must only be loved by him and by no one else (222d). According to Socrates' playful interpretation, Alcibiades aims to discourage Agathon from befriending Socrates by exposing him as an ironical lover who is in truth not a lover at all. Because Socrates disdains the beauty of the body and everything else that are deemed beautiful or noble by the multitude (216e), Alcibiades says, it would be a painful mistake for the beautiful poet

⁷⁶¹ See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 307-312. Cf. Gagarin, "Socrates' 'Hybris'," 22-37. Unlike Gagarin, who identifies Alcibiades' censure of Socrates as Plato's portrayal of Socrates as a teacher, I show that Plato in truth presents Alcibiades as a helplessly ironic character who failed to understand Socrates and to resist non-philosophical allurements.

⁷⁶² See Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, 28.

to believe that Socrates is the lover that he seems to be. According to Alcibiades, Agathon should take everything that Socrates says and does with a grain of salt. The irony of Alcibiades' exposition of Socrates, of course, lies in Socrates' own account of the truth about the philosopher's love or desires, i.e., the beautiful parts of the truth about *erōs*. Alcibiades does not know that Agathon has just heard Socrates' own account of the philosopher's pursuit of true beauty, which is said to be eternal and absolute. While it is unclear what Agathon makes of the highest and the most beautiful things in Socrates' speech, he does choose to sit beside Socrates instead of sitting between Socrates and Alcibiades when he hears that Socrates wishes to praise him (223a). Ultimately, Alcibiades fails to separate Socrates and the beautiful poet whose name is "good" because of Socrates' resourcefulness⁷⁶³ and his own lack of power. Furthermore, he does not get the chance to finally listen to Socrates' praise of Agathon (or the "good") because a larger crowd of revelers will have had rushed in, compelling everyone to drink beyond measure.

B. The organization of Alcibiades' speech

As Paul Friedländer notes, the organization of Alcibiades' speech reminds of the image of the sculptured silenuses that he uses to describe Socrates.⁷⁶⁴ Like these figurines that have both an external and an internal appearance, Alcibiades' speech is also organized in a way that mystifies the truth "within."⁷⁶⁵ Aside from the very beginning of his speech where Alcibiades likens Socrates to these silenuses that can be opened up if split into halves, this remarkable image is explicitly mentioned again near the middle⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶³ See *Symposium* 203d.

⁷⁶⁴ See Friedländer, *Plato: The Dialogues*, 30. See also Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 322.

⁷⁶⁵ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 271.

⁷⁶⁶ See *Symposium* 216d.

and the end⁷⁶⁷ of the speech, where Alcibiades likens Socrates' speeches to the same figurines that "at first look altogether laughable" (221e). Alcibiades emphasizes the satirical appearance of Socrates at the boundaries or "surfaces" of his speech, which differs from the truth about Socrates that is placed "within." In other words, the organization of Alcibiades' speech imitates the ironical appearance of his Socrates and his Socrates' speeches, which are said to contain "words and phrases that...wrap around themselves on the outside...like...the very hide of a hybristic satyr" (ibid).⁷⁶⁸

Between the first and the last explicit mentions of these silenuses, Alcibiades recounts the virtues of Socrates in a chronological order, beginning with their earliest encounters when Alcibiades was still young. This recollected account of Socrates' virtues can be divided into halves. In the first half, Alcibiades likens Socrates to the satyr Marsyas who charms human beings with his powerful flute music. According to Alcibiades, Socrates is just as powerful as this satyr, except he charms human beings "with the power from his mouth" instead of some musical instrument (215c). Of all the good speakers that he has heard in his life, only Socrates' speeches can make Alcibiades question his own way of life and to feel shame for trying to handle "the affairs of the Athenians" when he himself was "still in need of much" (216a). In the second half of Alcibiades' account of Socrates' virtues, he recounts Socrates' actions and pursuits during times of war. At both Potidaea and Delium, Alcibiades recalls, Socrates had displayed the most remarkable endurance and courage during times of hardship. In addition to saving both Alcibiades and his weapons at Potidaea, Socrates had also saved

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 221d.

⁷⁶⁸ See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 322. As Rosen notes, Alcibiades' speech expresses his own conflictual or "Silenic nature."

Laches during the flight from Delium, where “he made it plain to everyone even at a great distance that if one touches this real man, he will defend himself vigorously” (221b). In addition to being a powerful speaker, Alcibiades’ Socrates is also a great soldier who is characterized by exceptional self-control.⁷⁶⁹

Between his recollections about the virtues of Socrates in terms of both speech and action, where he mentions the silenuses for the second time,⁷⁷⁰ Alcibiades recounts his dealings with Socrates as his lover thinking that he would be able to hear everything that Socrates knew if he had gratified Socrates’ desires (217a). Unlike the typical lover, however, Socrates never spoke with Alcibiades in “the way a lover would converse with his beloved in isolation” (217b). Since Socrates is “far more invulnerable to money than Ajax to iron” (219e), he has no use for Alcibiades’ wealth or relations. Indeed, Alcibiades’ inability to get Socrates to ask for his favours eventually compelled him to pursue Socrates as if he were Socrates’ lover instead of Socrates’ beloved. When his attempt at the gymnasium had been foiled, Alcibiades plotted to ensnare Socrates by inviting him to dinner, and after this had foiled also, he renewed his plot once more by conversing with Socrates “far into the night” to compel Socrates to stay (217d). It is here, at the very core of his speech, that Alcibiades discloses Socrates’ “magnificently overweening deed” (217e). When “the lamp was extinguished and the boys were outside” (218c), Alcibiades recalls after some embarrassed remarks about the appropriateness of his present disclosure,⁷⁷¹ he confessed to Socrates that it would be very foolish for him

⁷⁶⁹ See Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 274.

⁷⁷⁰ *Symposium* 216d.

⁷⁷¹ Rosen argues that Alcibiades is embarrassed because he had failed to conquer Socrates, not because he thought that his seduction of Socrates was inappropriate. See Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 303.

not to gratify Socrates since Socrates was the most competent “fellow helper”⁷⁷² if he wished to “become the best possible” (ibid). In response to his confession, Alcibiades says, Socrates had said “very ironically” (218d) to Alcibiades that his proposal would be allow him to get the far better deal if he was right about Socrates’ ability to make him better. If Alcibiades was correct about the “impossible beauty” that he sees in Socrates (218e), then he would be “trying to acquire the truth of beautiful things in exchange for the seeming and opinion of beautiful things” (ibid), that is, “to exchange ‘gold for bronze’” (219a). As it turns out, Socrates’ unwillingness to exchange virtue for sex is the concealed truth about him as a lover. Socrates had deceived Alcibiades to think that he could learn from Socrates if he simply behaved according to the convention of Athenian pederasty. Dishonoured by Socrates’ unusual sobriety, Alcibiades accuses Socrates of having “despised and laughed” at his “youthful beauty” and “committed outrage against it” (219c).⁷⁷³ Unlike the Socrates who seems to be “erotically inclined to the beauties and is always around them” (216d), Alcibiades eagerly reveals through his “silenic or satyr drama” (222d), the true Socrates is “not at all concerned if someone is beautiful” (216d-e) as he holds beauty and the other things that the many pursue in “great contempt” (216e). Alcibiades’ truth about Socrates is that he is a deceptive non-lover who disregards both the conventional and the popularly believed things, and he is hubristic or outrageous to the extent that his incredible sobriety enables him to resist the bodily desires in such

⁷⁷² Cf. *Symposium* 212b. Earlier that evening, Socrates had identified Eros the philosophical daemon as the best “co-worker” of human nature for beholding and giving birth to true virtue.

⁷⁷³ See Rosen, *Plato’s Symposium*, 309-310; Strauss, *On Plato’s Symposium*, 273. As Rosen and Strauss note, Alcibiades mistakes Socrates’ sobriety as hubris. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates had defined hubris or excess as the rule of the desire for bodily pleasure, that is, as a kind of madness that arises from human diseases. See *Phaedrus* 238a, 265a.

transgressive ways.⁷⁷⁴ Socrates is a powerful and virtuous man who deserves to be admired, but as much as such a virtuous man is admirable, he is also contemptible or hated to the extent that he is able to act against convention.

C. Alcibiades' exposition of Socrates

There are notable parallels between Socrates' speech about Eros and Alcibiades' speech about Socrates. Just as Socrates calls Eros the best "co-worker" of human nature for beholding the truly beautiful things (212b), so too Alcibiades identifies Socrates, a "truly daemonic and amazing being" (219c), as the most competent "fellow helper" for becoming the best possible (218d). And to the extent that Socrates' praise of Eros can be identified as a praise of the unshod philosopher who resembles the daemon, one could categorize both speeches as speeches about Socrates or Socratic philosophy. Plato juxtaposes two distinct speeches that praise (or censure) Socrates as a philosophical lover, which compels his audience to compare Socrates' own disclosures of the truth about philosophical *erōs* to the testimony of Alcibiades, Socrates' beloved who claims to have been painfully afflicted by Socrates' philosophical speeches (218a). Since Alcibiades was not present to hear Socrates' speech about philosophical *erōs*, Alcibiades' speech about Socrates is necessarily ironic to those who had heard (or read) it. In other words, the fact that Socrates does not correct anything that Alcibiades says must be taken with a grain of salt. In the light of his own praise of Eros, one cannot simply interpret Socrates' silence to mean that Alcibiades' speech captures the complete truth about him.

⁷⁷⁴ According to Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus*, it is unnatural or beastly for human beings to be unable to rein in such desires. See *Phaedrus* 249b-c, 250e-251a. Michael Gagarin makes the interesting argument that Socrates' sobriety had "frustrated" Alcibiades' "attempt to learn from him," which led to Alcibiades' tragic downfall. See Gagarin, "Socrates' 'Hybris,'" 35-36. I fail to see how Plato's Socrates could have contributed to Alcibiades' education by not rejecting his advances or acting soberly.

Like Alcibiades' drunken and blindfolded entrance, his honest account of the truth about Socrates is thick with irony.

Alcibiades describes the power of Socrates' speeches in relation to the affections of his own "heart or soul" (ibid), which reminds of the art of thinking that the philosopher uses to examine the nature of things.⁷⁷⁵ Instead of being motivated by these speeches to pursue the truth or lead the philosopher's way of life, however, Alcibiades' experience is characterized by shame and pain.⁷⁷⁶ The image that he uses to describe Socrates' speeches is that of a viper, which bites at "the place that is the most liable to pain" whenever it gets hold of "a young soul that is not ill-favored by nature" (ibid). The power of these philosophical speeches—like the excruciating pains of a snakebite—compels Alcibiades to "do and say anything whatsoever" (ibid). Similar to Socrates, Alcibiades is also convinced of the praiseworthiness of philosophical speeches, which according to him "have the largest numbers of images of virtue in them" (222a), but unlike Socrates, Alcibiades is pained by the sight of these images and his convictions about the worth of philosophical speeches. According to Alcibiades' own diagnosis, he is pained by these things because they are not the only things that affects his soul. In addition to Socrates' speeches, Alcibiades' soul is also profoundly affected by the opinions of the multitude or the honours that he gets "from the many" (216b). Socrates' speeches make him realize that there is much that is hollow and senseless in the opinions of the many, but the aristocratic youth is unable to sever himself from them.⁷⁷⁷ Alcibiades is deeply attached

⁷⁷⁵ *Phaedrus* 266b, 270d.

⁷⁷⁶ See Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 265. As Strauss notes, Alcibiades' Socrates is "a successful preacher of repentance."

⁷⁷⁷ Moreover, Alcibiades identifies the power of Socrates' speeches with demagoguery. See Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 299; Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, 264.

to the honours that he gets from the multitude, and he is afraid to lose them if he is to lead Socrates' way of life and "grow old beside him" (216a). To the extent that he is unable to contradict Socrates' philosophical speeches, Alcibiades is even more powerless in relation to the speeches of the multitude, that is, the things that the many say about the noble and the shameful. In effect, Alcibiades' attempt to expose Socrates' two-facedness reveals the contradictory dynamisms within his own soul. It is not Socrates but Alcibiades who is being pulled asunder by the two different kinds of speeches.

In other words, Alcibiades' self-knowledge rests on a dualistic conception of the opposed powers of philosophy and opinion;⁷⁷⁸ he laments his dealings with Socrates because he would have remained content if he simply lived according to opinion or convention and was never troubled by Socrates' philosophical speeches. While such an understanding allows Alcibiades to give an account of his own afflictions, it does not help him to accurately depict the nature of Socrates, that is, the powers and affections of the philosopher's soul. Indeed, Alcibiades' bitter exposition of the truth about Socrates rests on a conventional understanding of the relationship between a lover and his beloved. For Alcibiades, Socrates had mocked his youthful beauty and violated the convention of Athenian pederasty for rejecting his advances and offers. This suggests that Alcibiades is unfamiliar with the philosopher's conception of the "correct practice of pederasty," where the philosophical lover is led to pursue true beauty through the examination of apparently beautiful things. Alcibiades misidentifies Socrates as an outrageous deceiver or a non-lover who only pretended to love his beauty, when Socrates is in truth a lover whose love or lack of true beauty compels him to measure the beauty of the body to the beauty of

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. *Phaedrus* 237d-238a.

other things, such as the soul, the laws and the sciences.⁷⁷⁹ In other words, Alcibiades' conventional understanding of pederasty is unable to shed light on the true affections of Socrates' soul or the erotic basis of Socrates' actions as a philosophical lover. Moreover, Alcibiades' account of Socrates' virtues in terms of his amazing endurance suggests that he had also misidentified Socrates with the things that Socrates loves and pursues, although endurance and eternity are by no means identical things. Because Alcibiades does not know about the state or way of life that is between the beautiful and the ugly or the wise and the ignorant,⁷⁸⁰ he can only make sense of Socrates' extraordinary feats or describe them from the perspective of the non-philosophers. In the end, Alcibiades' inability to transcend from the opinions of the multitude and the honours that he gets from them made it impossible for him to befriend philosophy or attain its goals.⁷⁸¹

By displaying Alcibiades' exposition of Socrates in juxtaposition to Socrates' own praise of Eros, Plato does not simply portray Socrates as a failed teacher whose tactless sobriety had led to Alcibiades' corruption and ruin.⁷⁸² In light of Socrates' own speech which the drunken Alcibiades had failed to hear, one is compelled to identify Alcibiades as an ironic character who fails to produce a reliable account of the truth about Socrates as a lover. Like Phaedrus who fails to reflect on the things that Socrates had said in the *Phaedrus*, which compelled him to speak or act in an ironic manner, the drunken Alcibiades also speaks or acts in the *Symposium* in ignorance of the truth. Instead of criticizing Socrates for his failure to educate Alcibiades, Plato displays through

⁷⁷⁹ *Symposium* 210a-210e.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 202a-b.

⁷⁸¹ In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates identifies the philosopher's transgression from the opinions of the multitude as a kind of madness, one that is characterized as the "divine release from the customary habits." See *Phaedrus* 265a, 249c-d

⁷⁸² Cf. Gagarin, "Socrates' 'Hybris,'" 33-37.

Alcibiades' drunken speech the opposed affections of Alcibiades' own soul and his inability to understand Socrates' speeches and actions as a philosophical lover. And by allowing his audience to compare Alcibiades' ironical account of the truth about Socrates and Socrates' own praise of Eros the philosophical daemon, Plato sought to accomplish through writing what his Socrates accomplishes through speech, which is nothing other than the dissemination of the art of thinking that the philosopher calls dialectic.⁷⁸³

⁷⁸³ See *Phaedrus* 276e-277a, 278c-d.

Conclusions

Plato's art of philosophical writing

This dissertation sought to clarify the relationship between philosophy and the literary form of Plato's writings. It argues that Plato disseminates the philosopher's art of thinking by writing in a literary form which has been identified as the "display of rhetoric." By displaying in his writings Socrates' attempts to persuade in juxtaposition to the persuasions or teachings of the non-philosophers, Plato allows his audience to examine the various speeches (and their various contents) in a philosophical or dialectical manner⁷⁸⁴ and reflect on the praiseworthiness of the philosopher's love and pursuit of wisdom for themselves. In other words, this dissertation has demonstrated the agreement between Plato and his Socrates about the serious pursuit of the philosopher who would write, where by employing the "dialectic method" the philosophical writer would be able to sow in fitting souls "intelligent words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them" and "yield seed from which there spring up in other minds other words capable of continuing the process for ever, and which make their possessor happy, to the farthest possible limit of human happiness."⁷⁸⁵ Plato's philosophical writings are informed by the art of dialectic, which is used for examining the natures (the powers and affects) of speech and soul, and they teach the same art to those who would participate in the unspoken action of the dialogues, i.e., the action of philosophical thinking.

To demonstrate Plato's dissemination of the art of dialectic through his "display of rhetoric," this dissertation began with a close reading of the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates attempts to persuade Phaedrus to pursue the true art of speech

⁷⁸⁴ See *Phaedrus* 266b.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 276e-277a.

or philosophy. In addition to Socrates' interpretation of the preceding speeches of praise and blame about *erōs* in that dialogue,⁷⁸⁶ it is also in this discussion of speech that one finds Socrates' speculations about the serious goals of the philosophical writer.⁷⁸⁷ Put differently, it is in this part of the *Phaedrus* that Plato displays the philosopher's speeches about artful (and noble) speech, thus offering the insights that can be used for the interpretation of the ends and means of Plato's own philosophical writings. To persuade Phaedrus of the harmfulness of the approachable kind of rhetoric that is taught by the famous rhetoricians, which depends on the opinions of the multitude rather than knowledge of the truth,⁷⁸⁸ Socrates makes use of many analogies and imageries that Phaedrus would be able to understand (260b-e). However, when Socrates discovers that he would be unable to lead Phaedrus to reflect on the art of dialectic—the art of thinking which he repeatedly endorses as the basis of the truly artful rhetoric⁷⁸⁹—he was compelled to demonstrate to Phaedrus the laboriousness of the true art of rhetoric by creating a resemblance between the arts of the Asclepiads whom Phaedrus trusts and the art of dialectic.⁷⁹⁰ In other words, Socrates both openly endorses the art of dialectic as the art of thinking that underlies all other arts and tacitly relies on it in his own persuasion of Phaedrus about the art of speech, which must “take account of the characters” of one's audience and “divide things by classes and comprehend particulars under a general idea” (273d-e). Moreover, by participating in the concealed action of Socrates' persuasion of Phaedrus, that is, the dialectical examination of different kinds of speeches and souls in

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., 262c-266c.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., 276c-277a, 278c-d.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., 259e-260d, 273b, 277d-e.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., 266b, 269b, 276e.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 268a-270e.

terms of their different powers and affects, one comes to realize the unspoken action of Plato's philosophical writing which displays Socrates' tortuous attempt to persuade Phaedrus about speech.

While the insights that can be attained from the close reading of the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus* can be used for the interpretation of any of Plato's writings, this dissertation focused on the ten speeches of censure and praise about *erōs* which Plato displays in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. In both dialogues, Socrates is compelled to defend in some speech contest the philosopher's love of wisdom against other speeches of praise or blame about *erōs*, and it is his speeches about *erōs* (or Eros) that help to elucidate the motivations behind Plato's dissemination of the philosopher's art of thinking through writing. This effort began with an interpretation of the three speeches in the *Phaedrus*, which heavily relied on Socrates' remarks about these speeches in the same dialogue⁷⁹¹ as well as his speculations about the philosopher's serious and artful writings. By taking heed of Socrates' comments about the "seafaring" qualities of Lysias' "un-erotic" speech,⁷⁹² I was able to trace out the parallels between this speech and the iconic "love-story" of Medea and Jason as it is arranged in Euripides' tragic play. To persuade Phaedrus of the advantages of befriending him as a "non-lover" instead of some "mad" lover, Lysias arranged his speech in a way that tacitly champions Jason's views as a selfish "non-lover," hence affirming a prejudice that Phaedrus had apparently held against the "mad" lovers. At the same time, Phaedrus is not simply persuaded by Lysias' argument that one should befriend him as one's non-lover. More importantly, Phaedrus is

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 262c-266b.

⁷⁹² Ibid., 243c.

enticed by the prospects of becoming a powerful speaker like Lysias who can defend unorthodox positions with clever words.

In order to gratify his own love of speeches, Socrates, who was unimpressed by Lysias' speech which Phaedrus admires, was compelled to enter a speech contest with Lysias by composing a censure of *erōs* of his own,⁷⁹³ which according to Phaedrus' demands must be "better than that in the book and no shorter and quite different" (235d). According to Socrates' speech, *erōs* is a kind of hubris or excess which takes place when one's desire for the pleasures of bodily beauty overwhelms one's "opinions which strives for the best" (237d-e). Because the lover is "a slave to pleasure," he will necessarily make his beloved "as pleasing to himself as possible" (238e). Indeed, this pleasure-driven lover would not promote the physical or intellectual growth of his beloved, for only then will the beloved, who becomes defective both in the body and the mind through his association with this lover, "be most agreeable to him and most harmful to himself" (239b-c). On the surface, Socrates' first speech in the *Phaedrus* is a straightforward censure of *erōs* as a form of hubris or excess. But if one makes note of its short prologue which identifies the speaker as a lover who disguises himself as a non-lover (237b), then one could interpret Socrates' speech as an exposition of Lysias' deceptive speech and the kind of eroticism that it promotes. Instead of championing Jason's claim to sobriety (and self-control),⁷⁹⁴ Socrates' speech highlights the fickleness of the deceptive "non-lover" who is overwhelmed by the forces of hubris and opinion. The mad lover who reproaches

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 236d-e.

⁷⁹⁴ Euripides, *Medea* 555-565.

the beloved at the beginning of Lysias' speech, as it turns out, is a beloved who had been deceived by an unrestrained "non-lover" whose desires had simply waned.

Unlike Socrates' censure of *erōs*, his palinode was not the product of Phaedrus' compulsion. Instead, Socrates was compelled to purify his own speech through another speech because he thinks that his censure of *erōs*—like Lysias' speech that it parodies—had been impious, as one could not censure *erōs* if it was "a god or something divine" (242e). In other words, Socrates is unsatisfied with his parody of Lysias' speech which had characterized *erōs* as a kind of madness that harms the beloved. According to Socrates, the method of purification which he will use to purify his own speech was also known to Stesichorus, the lyric poet who was able to avoid punishment by correcting his own speeches or stories about the divine.⁷⁹⁵ Like his praise of Eros in the *Symposium*, Socrates displays in the *Phaedrus* someone else's speech by way of imitation. And as Socrates himself says in the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, his two speeches about *erōs* in this dialogue can be synoptically viewed as two parts of a whole, insofar as they both liken *erōs* to some form of madness.⁷⁹⁶ Whereas Socrates first censured the kind of *erōs* or madness that arises from "human diseases," his palinode—the second part of the Socrates' speech about *erōs* "as a whole" (265c-d)—praises the kind of madness that arises from "a divine release from the customary habits" (265a). Through the palinode, Socrates purifies his censure of *erōs* by locating the two kinds of madness within the soul's journey across multiple planes of existence over infinite time.⁷⁹⁷ Because the soul of the philosopher can recollect the truly beautiful sights that he had seen upon the "plain

⁷⁹⁵ Like *erōs*, Helen, who is said to be the daughter of Zeus, is both mortal and divine. Homer is said to have been stricken with blindness because he had slandered Helen in the *Iliad*.

⁷⁹⁶ See *Phaedrus* 265a-266b.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 245c-249d.

of truth” (248b) as a fully winged soul, Socrates says, he is goaded by the desire to behold beauty as such again during his life as a human being. The presence of the beloved, moreover, aids the philosophical lover in his recollection of true beauty as he is led to adorn the beloved like his god, which allows these lovers to regain the wings of the soul and finally follow the gods in their ascent to “behold the things outside of heaven” (247c). On the other hand, he who fails to recollect these beautiful and divine things, such as “beauty, wisdom, goodness and all such qualities” (246e), does “not quickly rise from this world to that other world and to absolute beauty when he sees its namesake here when he looks upon it” (250e). Instead, Socrates says, he “gives himself up to pleasure and like a beast proceeds to lust and begging...makes license his companion and is not afraid or ashamed to pursue pleasure in violation of nature” (251a). In effect, Socrates’ speech in the *Phaedrus* characterizes *erōs* as a two-fold phenomenon which resembles the two different kinds of madness that can affect human beings, and one is more subject to one or the other based on one’s desire for the sight of true moral beauty or the lack thereof.

Like his two-part speech in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates also produces in the *Symposium* an elaborate speech about *erōs* as a complex or multiform affection of the human soul. Although his Diotima does not speak about the immortality of the soul or the cyclical journey that it takes across the different planes of existence, her account of *erōs*, like Socrates’ account in the *Phaedrus*, also captures the complexity of human beings as mortal creatures that are affected by different and conflicting desires. Because of the difference in dramatic setting, Socrates is far less critical of the animalistic kind of *erōs* (or madness) in the *Symposium* than he is in the *Phaedrus*, especially as the dignified

speakers who had praised or legitimized this kind of *erōs* are still sitting at the same table. Indeed, aside from the two beloveds who do not praise the pleasures that one could obtain as lovers, all those who spoke before Socrates had praised and justified the lover's pursuits with respect to bodily pleasure. Nevertheless, Socrates praises in both speeches in response to the speeches of the non-philosophers the philosophical kind of *erōs* and the action that the philosophical lover takes to acquire the sight of truly beautiful—and immutable—things.⁷⁹⁸ In both speeches, moreover, Socrates identifies dialectic as the essential action of the philosophical lover who pursues the sight of beauty as such.⁷⁹⁹ And like Socrates who displays the speeches of others in his own elaborate speeches about *erōs*, Plato also displays in his elaborate writings the speeches of others in juxtaposition. In effect, both Plato and his Socrates speaks or writes according to what Socrates discloses about the philosopher's art of speech in the *Phaedrus*. Since dialectic is the art of thinking that the philosopher wishes to disseminate in some "fitting soul" (276e), the philosopher must write in a way that would facilitate dialectic as such in the mind of the audience. In other words, the philosopher must arrange the various parts of his speech in a way that would allow the "serious pursuit" (278d) of philosophy to take place. By displaying Socrates' speeches about both *logos* and *erōs* in juxtaposition to the speeches of the non-philosophers, Plato allows his audience to "collect" and "divide" the various kinds of speeches and souls as the philosopher would, for only then could they truly appreciate the moral worth of philosophy as such.

⁷⁹⁸ See *Phaedrus* 247c-d; *Symposium* 210e-212a.

⁷⁹⁹ See *Phaedrus* 249b-c; *Symposium* 210a-210e.

Since the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* are the only dialogues in which Plato displays Socrates' speeches of praise and blame about *erōs* in juxtaposition to the speeches of the non-philosophers, the conclusions that have been made about these dialogues cannot be directly used for the interpretation of the other Platonic dialogues or Plato's philosophical writing generally. At the same time, the insights that can be obtained through the close reading of these dialogues, which began with the discussion of speech in the *Phaedrus*, anticipates similar studies of Plato's other writings. Are Plato's "unerotic" writings—those that do not feature Socrates' attempt to persuade about the philosopher's love of wisdom—similar to these "erotic" writings insofar as they also facilitate and defend the philosopher's art of thinking which Socrates calls dialectic? Why doesn't Socrates speak about *erōs* in those dialogues, and what kind of speeches does Plato display in them? And to the extent that these important questions will have to be answered in future efforts, it is evident from this study of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* that Plato's philosophical writings do not advance some rigid system of metaphysical doctrines which he would like to impart through the speeches of the various interlocutors, nor are they works of drama that contain no serious teachings of any kind. Socrates' brief descriptions of the highest good in his praises of *erōs*, for instance, are attempts to account for the philosopher's desire to know and hence why he must examine the speeches of others about the good. As such, what Socrates says about the highest good cannot be simply taken as Plato's metaphysical doctrines or the philosophical content of the dialogues. According to Socrates' own speculations about speech,⁸⁰⁰ his attempts to describe the highest good must be viewed in the light of the other parts of his

⁸⁰⁰ *Phaedrus* 264c.

speeches and the various speeches to which his speeches respond as wholes, for only then does the serious underlying action of philosophy or dialectic come to light. At the same time, Plato's dialogues are not dramas that contain no serious teachings of any kind, as philosophy or dialectic *is* the serious teaching which he sought to impart by displaying speeches or rhetoric about the good.⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 278a. See also, Strauss, "Plato's Political Philosophy," 351.

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