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## Stranger Love

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Stranger Love

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The Division of Languages and Literature

by

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*For Thomas*

## Acknowledgments

My parents, for everything.

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And Thomas Bartscherer – but where to begin?

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## Whither and Whence?

ὦ φίλε Φαῖδρε, ποῖ δὲ καὶ πόθεν;

“Where are you going and where have you been?” In Greek, *poi dē kai pothen?* Those are the first words of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Those are its constant refrain.

Perhaps it is nothing remarkable that Socrates, running into his dear friend Phaedrus, would want to know what he's up to – Phaedrus is handsome, the day is beautiful, and Socrates could certainly do worse than to spend his time talking with a handsome man. But, in this dialogue about eros, the questions of whither and whence will prove to be of urgent importance, for how you fall in love – that is, where you're going – has everything to do with where you've been.

Sometimes, and only sometimes, Socrates says, falling in love can lead to philosophy. My project began as an attempt to understand how it is that an all too earthly longing for a beautiful body could be transformed into a love of wisdom. As I worked toward an answer, I found that the two innocuous questions that Socrates asks at the beginning of the dialogue were becoming my refrain. As it turns out, whether or not you're capable of philosophy – that is, where you're going – also has everything to do with where you've been.

In his great speech, the palinode, Socrates tells us that before we are born our souls follow the gods in a constant circuit around the heavens, where they rejoice in what periodic glimpses of the Truth they can catch as they struggle to keep time with their divine ringleaders. Sooner or later, though, the soul becomes confused, heavy, heavier, and finally too heavy to hold itself aloft any longer. And so it falls, forgetting on its way down where it came from and all the perfect beauty that it once beheld. When that fallen soul collides with a body, the resulting jumble is a human being.

Eros emerges from disaster. Beautiful faces are wounds in this world through which the lost and forgotten divine world still shines – if the eyes of our souls remain sharp enough to see it. Our desire for beautiful bodies is actually, then, a desire for home. Philosophers are those who, feeling themselves to have been misplaced, spend their lives trying to get back to where they ought to be. Because we require eros to attune us to the fact that our rightful home is somewhere else, philosophers must first be lovers. An erotic education to philosophy is a tragic education. It is also the only true education that there can be.

## Stranger Love

## I

Ἔρωσ Ἔρωσ, ὁ κατ' ὀμμάτων  
στάζων πόθον, εἰσάγων γλυκεῖαν  
ψυχᾷ χάριν οὐς ἐπιστρατεύσει,  
μή μοί ποτε σὺν κακῷ φανείης  
μηδ' ἄρρυθμος ἔλθοις.

Eros Eros who over the eyes  
drips longing, who leads sweet grace  
into the soul of those he marches against,  
may you not appear to me with evil,  
and may you not come out of turn.  
Euripides, *Hippolytus*\*

Eros is an accident. Poets know that eros happens as illness, as fire, as death happens: suddenly, and without asking. Socrates knows too. Yet, knowing the danger of eros and its madness, he praises it, for “there is no greater good...that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man” than a philosophic life shared between lovers, which only eros can bring about (256b).<sup>1</sup> If we are curious about the greatest good, then we should ask how it is that a lover's precarious eros for one beloved can become love of wisdom. How does a lover turn into a philosopher? What are the risks?

In the *Phaedrus*, the lover's transformation depends on a certain alignment of fate and chance – the twin meanings of *tuchē*. Desire may overtake any human animal by chance, but the question of whether it turns into desire for wisdom seems to be at least in part decided by fate. We might say that the change that makes a lover into a philosopher is an education, for where should education lead if not to the greatest good? But we should also be uneasy. Desire is contingent – treacherously so – and an education that depends on desire is also contingent. If the lover's desire is thwarted in any of the manifold ways it may well be, then it is unlikely, if not

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\* My translation.

1 All quotations from the *Phaedrus* are from the Nehamas and Woodruff translation except where I have indicated otherwise.

impossible, that he will 'complete' his education and become a philosopher. In other words, education befalls a man as accidentally as illness, as fire, as love, but only if his soul is fit for it. Most souls are not.

The most pressing question for this first section is whether bodily eros can lead to philosophy, and if so, how. Curiously, though the lover's ascent from love of a boy to love of wisdom – *philosophia* – is the story of the Socrates' palinode, we hear almost nothing about the details of philosophy itself until the last moments of the dialogue. The story ends with the lover and beloved following “the assigned regimen of philosophy [τεταγμένην τε δίαιταν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν],” but what such a life would look like, Socrates has not yet said (256a). What we do know is that the pair's love of wisdom is somehow contingent on their being “modest and fully in control of themselves [ἐγκρατεῖς καὶ κόσμιοι ὄντες],” which is to say, contingent on their abstinence (256b). The lover's education to philosophy begins in bodily longing, but to act on that longing would be an irrevocable error. The nature of the relationship between sex and philosophy, and by extension between body and soul, is left obscure. By working toward an answer, we might hope to learn something about what it means to love wisdom and how one comes to love wisdom by loving a person first. In other words, we might learn something about what an erotic education is – its contingencies, its dangers. There will be many dangers.

Socrates' account of the lover's ascent to philosophy depends on a myth. Before we're born, our souls “patrol” all of heaven in constant flight (246b). The soul's wings are nourished by “beauty, wisdom, and goodness [καλὸν, σοφὸν, ἀγαθόν],” and wither in the presence of “foulness and ugliness [αἰσχρῶ δὲ καὶ κακῶ]” until, useless, they fall away (246d-e). The crippled soul falls in turn, and it is at this point that it “lights on something solid” – a body (246c). The “whole combination of soul and body is called a living thing [ζῶον τὸ σύμπαν

ἐκλήθη – ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα παγέν].” Socrates has created a world in which each of us comes from a great 'somewhere else' from which we have been exiled. Only very few people are able to catch the intimation that we are not quite at home here, that something has been lost. All who live are strangers. The lovers are those who know themselves as such.

Whether or not it is possible for you to remember where you came from depends on what sort of soul you have. Socrates has organized all the different sorts of souls into a hierarchy, the origin of which is as follows: when the soul is still in heaven, it follows a god as it goes about its heavenly business. When the god climbs to the “high tier at the rim of heaven” to delight in “seeing what is real and watching what is true [ἰδοῦσα...τὸ ὄν...τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τᾶληθῆ],” the sturdiest souls are able to follow, though with labor (247b-d). The others struggle to keep up – some will just snag the skirt of “Reality [τὰ ὄντα],” and others will see nothing at all (248a). How much of the real and true the soul saw in its struggle determines its place in the hierarchy.

Socrates' myth claims that there are innate differences among men which are determined before one has even arrived on earth, and which cannot be overstepped. A soul that saw little of Reality missed the sight because it was already heavy, jumbled, resistant to control. Men whose souls saw much of Reality will live closer to the truth than others. And yet every soul, regardless of how much it saw, forgets. Socrates has placed us in something of a ridiculous situation: not only are we all exiles from where we are meant to be, not only are our differences determined by the obscure criteria of another world, we have also managed to forget all of this rather important information concerning our whither and whence. As it turns out, this ridiculous situation is what makes eros possible.

The souls that saw the most in their travels following the god are the ones who will have the sharpest desire to see again what they have lost, despite the problematic fact that they have

forgotten that they ever lost anything at all. Those souls will be born into “wisdom-lovers or beauty-lovers, or they'll be musical and erotic [φιλοσόφου ἢ φιλοκάλου ἢ μουσικοῦ τινος καὶ ἐρωτικοῦ]” (248d). The rest, in descending order, are: kingly types, statesmen, doctors, prophets, poets, farmers, sophists, and tyrants. Rather than ascribing particular characteristics to different souls, Socrates categorizes these lower souls according to the professions of the men they will become. Maybe it is nothing strange that one sort of man should become a statesman and another a prophet, but this way of thinking becomes quite odd when applied to the highest sort of soul, of all the nine types, only this one is marked by its inclination to love. Love, whether of wisdom or beauty or bodies, is the work of a particular kind of person who happens to be predestined for it, and of which there are very few.

Is it, then, impossible for a sophist to love a boy, or a tyrant a hetaira, or a poet a flutegirl? Yes and no. When a man who has become somehow “defiled” sees a beautiful person, his immediate response is to “surrender to pleasure” and “set out in the manner of a four-footed beast, eager to make babies” (250e). He will also “go after unnatural pleasure [παρὰ φύσιν ἡδονήν], without a trace of fear or shame.” Socrates doesn't say what exactly that “unnatural pleasure” is, but it seems that he is referring to male-on-male sex.<sup>2</sup> Other men might go after women or boys and it doesn't seem to make much of a difference – what's important is that their 'love' is concerned with pleasure alone. This dumb, bestial shambling after sex is all that Socrates will allow to those who were not 'born to love.' They procreate. They have their pleasures. That's all.

Socrates' account of love among the lower types is limited because their love is limited. It

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2 The impulse to “make babies” is unfortunate, but not unnatural. Even in Socrates' first speech and the speech of Lysias, where the operative assumptions are that a beautiful boy is going to be courted by a host of older men and is eventually going to 'give his favors' to one of them, there is a creeping discomfort about this kind of sex. The relationship seems to be 'natural' enough – it is, at least, to be expected – but the sex isn't, or isn't *quite*. For the boy, sex should be merely transactional – he can accept, but ought not enjoy it. On the naturalness or unnaturalness of homosexual sex in Greek culture, see Dover 60-100.

begins and ends in the body. A man whose memory has been dulled by time or corruption is “not to be moved abruptly from here to a vision of Beauty itself when he sees what we call beauty here” (250e). Any common fool can fall in love with an image of Beauty itself, for Beauty “was radiant among the other objects” and “we grasp it sparkling through the clearest of our senses” (250c-d). It is the “most visible” and so “the most loved” by all. Most men are struck by “what we call beauty here” without catching the intimation that what they're seeing is in fact an image. They seek out sex as though it were the 'answer' to what they feel – and though it is *an* answer, it isn't the right one. Even if a man has his pleasure and is satisfied by that, he has missed the mark. His weak memory fails to remind him that the image is not what his soul truly wants.

Only one whose soul “has seen much in heaven” and who has a good memory has the capacity to learn from his initial physical desire and look beyond the bounds of the body. Instead of sucking the lover down deeper into this world in which the best things are only images of what *is*, love inspires in him a longing for the divine. He would even “sacrifice to his boy as if he were the image of a god [θύοι ἄν ὡς ἀγάλματι καὶ θεῶ τοῖς παιδικοῖς],” if he didn't possess some restraint (251a). He reacts to the boy's physical beauty by treating him as an earthly totem of something divine, which, according to Socrates, is what his handsome body is – an image of something else.

If eros strikes a man with the right sort of soul, it can lead him away from this world of images back to the divine, and in turn, to philosophy. The three options that Socrates names for that soul – the wisdom-lover, the beauty-lover, and the erotic – are steps in an ascent, beginning with the third and ending with the first (248d). A man begins as a lover of boys, then becomes the lover of a single boy, then, finally, somehow, after terrible struggle, learns to love wisdom. He becomes a philosopher. How?

Much depends on chance. Though the erotic man is destined to love, he is not destined to love wisdom. First, the lover must happen upon a fitting object for his desire, a boy who is both beautiful enough to attract his notice and of a disposition akin to his own. Then, he must enslave the lustful aspect of his soul to his “better elements [τὰ βελτίω τῆς διανοίας]” so that his relationship with the boy not be degraded by sex (256a). It would be easy to fail. Maybe he never finds the right boy. As for his requisite abstinence, the difficulties are easy to imagine, but they also reflect one of the greater difficulties of Socrates' palinode – namely, that the ascent from bodily desire to philosophic desire ultimately depends on that initial explosion of eros for one particular instance of earthly beauty if it is to begin at all. Even for the sort of man who has the potential to become a philosopher, eros is at best a mixed effort involving both the body and the soul. The soul depends on the body in order to eventually enslave it, and so the impetus for the ascent necessarily endangers the success of its end.

But why must the stakes be so high? Why is it that eros can result in either sex or philosophy, but not both? Socrates assumes that one precludes the other, but never explains outright why this must be the case. It is not even obvious that the two actions are related, much less *how* they are. What, then, is the connection between sex and philosophy, and why is it that sex is a decisive, perhaps even irrevocable, mistake?

Eros is a response to beauty. For the philosophic-lover, eros is several contradictory responses to beauty at once. He responds to the beauty of a boy by wishing to worship him as though he were the image of a god, but he also responds with wild, barely endurable sexual desire. Eros can have more or fewer faces depending on the quality of one's soul. While the philosophic-lover's eros is a sort of dissonant duet sung by reverence and lust, someone with a duller soul (that is, most people) will have a simpler response to a beautiful body – they'll run

after it. In fact, Socrates' account of what happens when this latter soul sees “what we call beauty here” is so compressed that there is no thought between seeing the body and “surrendering to pleasure [ἡδονῆ παραδοῦς]” (250e). His eros only has one face, and so there is no need to reflect on it. The many-faced, self-contradicting eros of the philosophic-lover forces him to choose one way of being in love at the expense of the other.

In choosing, he makes a claim about what sort of thing he is: a body, or a soul in a body. Remember that, at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates asks, “am I beast more tangled and crazed than Typhon, or am I tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature?” (230a).<sup>3</sup> The word that I have translated as “crazed” comes from the verb *epituphōmai*, meaning 'to be burnt up.' One might be burnt up by lightning, but the tangled, many-headed lover burns with want. The combination of soul and body is in itself a sort of Typhonic tangle, for combinations are inherently monstrous. If the lover is to become a philosopher, he – burning with desire and lightning – must recognize that he is a monstrous thing. Lesser men might act as if they were only bodies, and so miss learning something about what they are. Lovers, though, feel the fault lines where the soul and the body do not and can never quite touch. The conflicting demands of eros make those lines ache. The lover learns that he is not a unity, and ultimately, that what he wants is not to be found where he is. The philosopher finds himself to be a stranger in the world where he was born. His enslavement of the body reflects some oblique understanding that his soul is a foreign object, and that this is not its home.

A lover is one who feels himself to be at once flesh and something other than flesh. He is, then, already divided between body and soul. To make matters worse, there are still more divisions within that division, for the soul, we'll find, is not a unity. The reason why the lover's

3 I've altered the Nehamas and Woodruff translation slightly: Typhon is “tangled and crazed” instead of “complicated and savage.” The Greek is, “εἴτε τι θηρίον τυγχάνω Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεθυμμένον, εἴτε ἡμερώτερόν τε καὶ ἀπλούστερον ζῶον, θείας τινὸς καὶ ἀτύφου μοίρας φύσει μετέχον.”

response to beauty is so fraught is because his soul is divided into three parts, whose struggle against each other Socrates recounts in the drama of the chariot-soul. This is the state of affairs: there is a charioteer, a good horse, and a bad horse. The good horse is a “lover of honor [τιμῆς ἐραστής]” who is characterized by his “modesty [αἰδοῦς]” and “self-control [σωφροσύνης]” (253d). The bad horse is a “companion to insolence and indecency [ὑβρεως καὶ ἀλαζονείας ἐταῖρος]” (253e). Socrates does not sketch such a profile for the charioteer. He is a more mutable entity whom we come to know through his relationship to his horses, and who, if he is to be defined at all, is defined by the way in which he manages them. However, we will find that the word 'manage' is not exactly apt to describe what the charioteer does. His actions, even when they are 'correct,' actually come from providential losses of control. The figure one might expect to be the champion of order within the soul is actually the first to be struck dumb.

With Ferrari, I read the three aspects of the soul as “allegorical figures,” characters in their own right with “multiple faculties” but who are “more limited” in their behavior than human beings (201-202). It is not quite right to say that one part of the soul is a neat representation of *logos*, another of *hubris*, and the last of *aidōs*, because the profiles that Socrates gives for each figure are too complicated to permit such a simple explanation. The divisions in the soul, however deeply felt, are not so easy to see. The bad horse, for instance, is the champion of bestial urges within the soul, but when brute force falls short of accomplishing his end, he is also able to use “persuasion” and “allow himself to be persuaded in turn” (188). Lust isn't dumb. The soul is not simply warring against the body – a threat from without – because the body and all its mute unruly longings have been subsumed into the soul in the figure of the bad horse. The whole soul wants sex.

Still, although each part of the soul holds one desire in common, the chariot does not

hasten as a unity toward a single goal. The charioteer feels the “goading of desire [πόθου κέντρων]” as though he were an animal himself, yet does not attempt to act on that feeling (253e). He hesitates, or perhaps he endures – though on what grounds, we don’t know. The good horse “prevents itself from jumping on the boy” by virtue of its extraordinary “sense of shame [αἰδοῖ]” (254a). Neither the charioteer nor the good horse are exempt from longing, but the good horse, introduced as a lover of honor, has a desire more powerful than his desire for the beautiful body – he loves honor, and so acts in accordance with his honorable shame. The good horse desires both to jump on the boy and to preserve his honor and so must bend to one desire at the expense of the other. Not only is the soul divided into three habitually dissonant factions, each faction faces internal divisions of his own.

Of the three factions of the soul, only the bad horse is certain of his desire. He “leaps violently forward” and “does everything to aggravate its yokemate and the charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex.” Both the charioteer and the good horse are “angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are terrible and unlawful [δεινὰ καὶ παράνομα ἀναγκαζομένω]” (254b).<sup>4</sup> They have an innate sense that what the bad horse wants is *paranomos*, or outside the law – in some profound way, *not permitted*. Exactly why the bad horse's desire isn't permitted, they don't seem to know, or else Socrates doesn't care to explain. The good horse and the charioteer instinctively treat sex as *paranomos*, but it is only an instinct, and it is quickly defeated by the hard persistence of the bad horse. “They see no end to their trouble” and “reluctantly agree to do as they have been told” (254b).

The charioteer's anger and the good horse's modesty make a weak opposition to the bad horse's singular desire, and so the whole soul defers to lust. The chariot draws “close” to the boy.

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4 A slight alteration to the Nehamas and Woodruff translation, which reads, “angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that are dreadfully wrong.”

Then, close, hoping to finally touch, the team is struck by the boy's face as if by a bolt of lightning” (254b). When the charioteer, stricken, sees that face and feels that bolt, “his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to *Sophrosyne*,” or Moderation.<sup>5</sup> The lover freezes and falls back. Although memories ostensibly come from within, this one strikes like an act of Zeus. The soul's memory, still linked in some obscure way to the other world from which it fell, acts for a moment like an imprisoned god hurling what thunderbolts it has left in a desperate imitation of god. At this moment in which the tension between the worldly and otherworldly is most intense, the lover remembers something about the forgotten, divine world from which he fell. When he remembers the sight of Beauty standing together with *Sophrosyne*, he recovers the *nomos* that the charioteer and good horse were struggling to uphold.

There is, then, a mythical answer to the question of why sex precludes philosophy: Beauty and *Sophrosyne* stand next to each other in the divine world, and so, if one wishes to live in accordance with the order of the universe, then one should respond to earthly beauty with *sophrosyne*. Those who stagger loin-first after the beautiful boy without any thought as to the propriety of their response have missed something not only about love and not only about beauty, but something fundamental about the logic of the world. Socrates has placed Beauty and *Sophrosyne* in a cosmic relationship which the charioteer only glimpses when he has been carried close enough to the boy to be struck by his beauty, this shining residue from a great somewhere else. Before the soul is struck by this lightning, there is no reason for the charioteer's and his good horse's automatic resistance to the aims of the bad horse: it's an impulse, no more considered than the bad horse's clamoring for sex. But now there is a reason to insist that sex would be *paranomos*, the *nomos* being that the concepts of beauty and *sophrosyne* are intimately

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5 Replacing “Self-Control” with *Sophrosyne* throughout.

bound. Intrinsic to the idea of beauty is the idea that one must not reach out and grab it. That is what the charioteer learns when he comes close and then too close to the boy.

Yet it is not right to say that he *chooses* to act in accordance with his newly-remembered *nomos*. Rather, he is so stricken by the sudden disturbance in his memory that he “falls over backward, awestruck [σεφθεῖσα]” and “at the same time has to pull the reins back so fiercely that both horses are set on their haunches” (254b). As Ferrari notes, the charioteer's “movement, which purports to establish the charioteer's command, [is] nothing more than an involuntary consequence of his shock” (189). Even the supreme self-control it would take to suddenly fall away from the boy at precisely the moment when the lover has gotten close enough to take him to bed actually comes from a sudden loss of control. The charioteer pulls his team backwards only because as he's falling backwards his hands have somehow managed to keep the reins. What's responsible for his 'command' is not human modesty nor moderation nor shame operating on the assumption that sex is wrong, but awe. The loss of control on account of lust is replaced by a loss of control owing to awe.

I want to return now to the problem that I addressed earlier, namely, that the impetus for the ascent to philosophy necessarily endangers the success of its end. If not for the persistent yanking of the lascivious horse, the charioteer would not get close enough to the boy to feel the soul's lightning bolt and, as Ferrari writes, “come into full repossession of his birthright” – that is, the memory of what his soul saw before he was born and with that memory, some shadowy knowledge of the fact that the beauty of the boy is only the image of something else that is more true (192). The charioteer must have already given up his hope of chastity and agreed to the demands of the bad horse. He must be just about to “suggest to the boy the pleasures of sex” (254a). He has no way of knowing that a sudden disturbance of the memory will keep him from

completing the action – the danger of degradation must become palpable before it can be averted. Chaste admiration of the boy's beauty is not enough to start the lover on the way to philosophy. Even a sort of tense friendship with the boy in which the lover is constantly, longingly contemplating his beauty is not quite adequate. The charioteer must engage seriously, however reluctantly, with the possibility and danger of sex. The *nomos* that beauty must be approached with *sophrosyne* can only be identified through near transgression.

One could say, as Nussbaum does in “Madness, reason, and recantation in the *Phaedrus*,” that the whole thing really isn't so dangerous, that “in people of good nature and training, the sensual and appetitive response is linked with, and arouses, complicated emotions of fear, awe, and respect, which themselves develop and educate the personality as a whole, making it both more discriminating and receptive” (215). One could say that the lover feels that “the extreme sensual stimulation involved in intercourse is incompatible with the preservation of reverence and awe for the other as a separate person” (217). One could say that the awe and respect that grow in the lover in the presence of his beloved lead him to make the decision that he must not touch what he so longs to touch, for to touch would somehow taint his sense of the beloved as a singular miracle. But there are two problems in Nussbaum's reading. The first is that it isn't clear that the “preservation of reverence and awe” for the beloved “as a separate person” is what moves the lover to his restraint. The second is that Nussbaum seems to assume that the lover has it in his power to make the decision to freeze everything and hover at the crest of the erotic wave, which does not seem to be what Socrates is saying. It isn't clear that the question of whether or not the lover does finally reach for the one he wants is a matter of decision at all.

The first problem emerges because Nussbaum conflates love of beauty with love of the particular. On the one hand, she says that “we advance toward understanding by pursuing and

attending to our complex appetitive/emotional responses to the beautiful” (215). At this moment in her reading, eros is a response to beauty. On the other hand, she also writes that “the stimulus of this particular boy's beauty (seen not as a replaceable piece of the beautiful, but as uniquely linked to his particular presence)” is what “proves necessary for the growth of the soul's wings,” that is, the development of the “personality” (215-216). Here she is reacting against the view that Socrates-as-Diotima recounts in the *Symposium*, a view that, in Nussbaum's reading, does not allow for individuals to be loved as individuals – “in a unique, or at least rare and deeply personal way” (218). The view that Socrates gives in the *Phaedrus*, which Nussbaum reads as a revision of the *Symposium*, allows the “unique person” to be “valued as a separate being with his or her own self-moving soul.” The lovers in the palinode are bound to each other by “their respect for the other's character” (219). It's difficult to say at what point in Nussbaum's reading the lover's response to his beloved's beauty becomes a response to the specifics of that boy's character. When she attributes the lover's abstinence to his “reverence” for “the other as a separate person,” she does not mention beauty at all. According to Nussbaum, we desire what is beautiful, but eventually come to love the particular as though for the sake of its particularity. Socrates, however, does not use that language.

Socrates leaves open the question that Nussbaum's reading assumes to be closed, namely, the question of what we fall in love with when we fall in love. He doesn't say anything about the lovers' “respect” for each other as “separate beings.” In fact, the lover doesn't love the boy for his distinct, singular humanity at all. Eros overtakes the lover when he sees the ghost of the divine in a human face. We know that his response to a “godlike face or bodily form that has captured Beauty well” is to “gaze at him with the reverence due a god” (251a). It's the “stream of beauty that pours into him” when he beholds his beloved that “waters the growth of his wings” (251b).

The lover isn't driven mad by the concrete details of the boy's face – he's driven mad by the overall effect, which is, 'he looks like a *god*.' As for the boy's 'personality,' to use Nussbaum's language, Socrates only says that lovers “track down their gods' true nature [τὴν τοῦ σφετέρου θεοῦ φύσιν]” because of their “driving need to gaze at the god” (252e). The lover doesn't love the boy because of his nobility or intelligence – he loves him because his character reminds him of something he has lost. What the lover's soul truly wants is to “gaze at the god” as it did before it was born into this body, but so long as that is impossible, it will gaze upon the god's beautiful image. According to Socrates, we – exiles all – love particular human beings insofar as they capture some aspect of that divine world which remains only an intimation, always out of reach. Why one would choose one image over another is still an unsettled case.

The second problem with Nussbaum's reading is that she allows the lover to maintain his calculative reasoning even as he goes mad with love. The lover is beside himself, but not so far beside himself that he can't make prudent decisions based on respect for the specifics of another person's existence as a separate entity. Madness no longer has the menace that makes it what it is. Socrates, I think, is more skeptical of the eros-mad lover's control over his calculative faculties. For it isn't, as Nussbaum writes, awe and respect for the particularities of the singular beloved that “develop and educate the personality.” It's the lover's awe at the sudden memory of Beauty itself that ultimately prevents him from flying at the boy with outstretched hands. The so-called 'education of his personality' consists of continual buffeting by an obscure memory. Furthermore, the lover is less respectful than he is lucky, for there isn't any indication that this bolt from beyond must happen; we only know that, this time, it does.

Socrates has laid out an extraordinarily delicate scenario. Merely maintaining control over one's lust is a paltry solution, which actually misses the mark as much as chasing after

young beauties in the manner of a four-footed beast. Recall Lysias' speech. Whether or not we believe that the non-lover truly is not in love, the premise of the speech is that his supreme self-control makes him superior to his wild, slobbering counterpart. He never loses his head, and thus will never do anything but what's useful for his non-beloved in their transactional alliance. The non-lover merely “represses the unforeseeable” and thus brings the boy into a sort of business partnership which has very little to do with the most blessed life of the philosophic lovers, who have earned their self-control (Linck 265). Socrates requires in his lover “an openness to the uncontrollable and unpredictable,” and his vision of eros demands that openness by force. The erotic temperament is by nature open to the uncontrollable and all its dangers.

*Sophrosyne* has turned out to be just as uncontrollable as madness. The *Phaedrus* tells us that in love there are at least two different types of madness – the “bad” madness that Lysis indicted in his speech, and the divine madness of the palinode (244a). The crazed lover whose madness is “a gift of the god [θεία δόσει]” is not the same with the poor fool whose head has merely fallen into his loins. And just as there are at least two forms of madness – human and divine – there may well be just as many corresponding forms of *sophrosyne*, or self-control. There's the self-control of the Lysian non-lover who has pathetically cloistered himself away from the possibility of erotic awe and whose alliance with the boy is founded on a series of deft calculations. The self-control which prevents him from falling in love with his pretty business partner is not the same as the self-control that holds the lover back from his beloved. Rather, “there exists a higher *sophrosyne*” which Griswold names “divine *sophrosyne*” (75). According to Griswold, “divine erotic madness and divine *sophrosyne* are to be united in the successful experience of love,” that is, an experience that ends with both the lover and his beloved turning to philosophy.

The accidental restraint of the lover whose charioteer has been knocked on his back by the sudden memory of Beauty itself is an instance of divine *sophrosyne*. The charioteer doesn't 'choose' to be struck by its bolt. There is no choice. Instead, the force that causes the lover to hold back comes from so deep within that it might as well come from without. He doesn't marshal all his virtues in the service of "respect" (to quote Nussbaum again) for the boy. If we want *sophrosyne* to be the sort of thing that might be cultivated intentionally by a philosopher in training, we're going to be disappointed. Just as divine erotic madness descends unexpectedly on one who may or may not be willing, divine *sophrosyne* flashes forth suddenly from some dark depth of the soul's perhaps fallible memory. Eros – at once lascivious and reverent – forces the lover into a precarious position from which he is rescued only by some spontaneous impulse of the soul, and only temporarily. One fragment of the divided soul saves another as one man tripping over his own foot might knock another out of the path of an incoming train – by a fortuitous accident, yes, but an accident all the same.

Divine *sophrosyne* only 'happens' when the lover is a breath away from transgression, and Socrates offers no guarantee that the lover will get so lucky every time. Though it is fortunate that the lover's more unruly impulses drag him close enough to the boy's beauty for that beauty to have its effect, that outcome does not negate the danger that brought it about. Nussbaum is not quite wrong when she writes that "the role of emotion and appetite is motivational" as well as "cognitive" on the grounds that "they give the whole person information as to where goodness and beauty are" (215). It's true that the bad horse fights to get close to what is beautiful. But that doesn't mean that whatever "emotions and appetites" are bound up in the figure of the bad horse ought to be scrubbed of their danger and considered salutary and safe. Socrates' drama of the chariot-soul shows that the possibility of failure is real, and that, because

failure is averted by accident and not calculated choice, in fact considerable.

The lover requires a violent education. First he needs to be dragged forward, then blasted back. There is no calm calculation; the lover can hardly catch his breath. And yet, painful as all this sounds, violence is the means by which what in us is still divine declares its existence, and in turn tells us some fragment of the truth about the world. The menace of the appetites moves where restraint would stand still. Without the threat of that menace, the soul would have no reason to remind us where we come from. I would say, with Belfiore, that the bad horse is a satyr-like figure who shares in their “superhuman, daimonic qualities,” is a “mixture of the bestial and the divine,” and has “an important role to play in helping the soul return to the rites of the gods” (187). We need the divine trials that the horrible satyr convinces us to bring upon ourselves. We need the voices in the soul to rail against each other, for one to win for one tense moment, for all to be buffeted backward again. The monstrous, Typhonic nature of the lover's soul creates a struggle in him which men who do not feel their divisions so painfully do not have, but it also allows him a rare glimpse of the divine world from which we have all been estranged. The image of the bad horse as a satyr preserves the gravity of his threat – for satyrs are just as bestial as they are divine – while also admitting that brute lust has some role to play in turning the lover to philosophy.

If there is something sacred about bodily longing in itself, not just as a guide toward the good which it is prudent to drop once we've found our way, then the line separating the soul from the body becomes muddled. It is not quite right to say that the soul turns to philosophy in spite of the body, for the soul would not be able to see what it needs to see in order to fall in love with wisdom if lust did not compel it to transgress. It is the conflict between the aspects of the soul that would remain abstinent and the one which would rather not that opens the lover to awe and

finally to philosophy.

It's a long conflict. Although the memory that strikes the charioteer when he comes near to the boy's face is certainly powerful, that moment is only decisive in that it sets the precedent for many other such moments. And there will be many. The bad horse – not to be beaten so easily – continues to persist in his immodest aims. The exhausted, beleaguered charioteer enters into negotiations with him and promises that he will approach the boy another time. The time comes. The bad horse harangues as before. Sex is again imminent. But the charioteer is “struck” once more “with the same feeling as before, only worse” and he “bloodies” the “foul-speaking tongue” of the bad horse by tearing violently at the bit (254e). The memory of Beauty and *Sophrosyne* gives sudden strength to the charioteer's violent restraint, previously ineffectual. Every time the bad horse pulls the chariot close to the boy, this happens. But one question that Socrates doesn't quite answer is how does it follow that, because one's soul has this sort of oblique knowledge that there is a Beauty itself which it could once behold and has since lost, the one who has already deferred to lust can suddenly fight it down. Why can't the lover have both sex *and* the intimation of Beauty itself? Why can't he be both worldly and otherworldly, so long as he must live in the world?

The mythical answer to that question is all that we have, and it is not particularly satisfying – if only because it amounts to saying that one ought to live a certain sort of life because in a conversation with a friend one day Socrates gave a certain account of the universe. To be satisfied in the belief that one should approach beauty with *sophrosyne* because of some words that Socrates said would not only be comical but completely beside the point. The one who upholds that belief on the basis of having been convinced by the *Phaedrus* would be acting with the same sort of unreasoned and cowardly self-control of the non-lover. Socrates stops short

of explanation because, if we are to recover our own buried memories of our lost home, we must first *fail* to approach beauty with *sophrosyne*. Knowledge emerges out of danger. If Socrates had satisfied us with a detailed, analytic explanation of 'the problem with sex,' then he would have failed us by prematurely saving us from our own transgressive dances, our own failures, and, for those of us who turn out to be lucky, the haphazard rescuing acts of our own souls.

It is only by exposing himself to the possibility of degradation that the lover can find out whether or not he is destined to love wisdom. If his memory fails him, then he will not remember what he used to know about the way things really are. If it doesn't, then he will have found out that sex is a lie he cannot tell. Switzer writes in the "The Topology of Madness: Philosophic Seduction in Plato's *Phaedrus*" that "in the present *mythos*, even the gods see the realm of perfect truth only imperfectly, for they are carried around by the revolution of the cosmos, and so "the *Phaedrus* allows for only this intermittent gazing upon what will have been, after all, the true 'beloved'" (24). Even when the soul has risen to its proper place in the universe, there is never any 'possession' of what it wants, never any sort of 'oneness.' The soul is always looking out at what is, never touching. The "apotheosis of chaste *sophrosyne*" is "eternal and never consummated desire." To think that sex is the solution to eros is mistaken. There is no solution to eros. The problem with sex is that it allows us to believe that there is satisfaction to be had, even if it's only temporary, when in fact there is only eros without end.

Sex ultimately precludes philosophy because it prevents the lover from remembering the truth. The question of why all sex – not just in excess, not just in 'deviant' forms – necessarily disrupts *sophrosyne* goes unasked and unanswered, not because it is obvious, but because one must transgress in order to remember the answer. Only by yielding to my longing for the lie will I find out whether or not it's a lie that I'm capable of telling, or rather, whether or not it's a lie that

my soul will allow me to tell. One of the reasons why sex is dangerous because it forces the soul to make a declaration about what sort of thing it is. Will it hurl the thunderbolt, or is it too enfeebled and forgetful? Am I the sort of person who can become a philosopher, or am I not? I won't know until I have come so close to transgression that I have practically already done it, as Abraham has already killed Isaac the moment his knife reaches its greatest height before the plunge.

Now we can begin to respond to the question of how eros can lead to philosophy. When desire befalls a man with an unsullied soul, it stirs his impulses into a discord that will ultimately force him to find out whether or not he is capable of loving wisdom. The lawless outbursts from the bad horse will jerk his chariot forward despite the fact that the good horse and charioteer would prefer to keep their distance. When the lover has the boy before him and need only stretch out his hands and quiet his own raving body, the sudden closeness of the beautiful face provokes his soul to remember the sight of Beauty itself. The thunderbolt memory of the other world's pure beauty attunes the lover to his true predicament: he has been misplaced. What he wants the most is not to be found where he is. When he becomes a philosopher, he will do so out of longing for his lost home.

## II

“What could I do but follow straight, invisibly thus led?”  
Eve, *Paradise Lost*

Eros begins to lead the lover to philosophy by leading him into temptation. It is only when he feels the heat of error sure as the heat of the boy that his soul will make some declaration about what sort of thing it is, either by remaining unmoved and showing itself to be incapable of philosophy, or by crying out and reminding the lover of his forgotten home. Philosophy happens to those who feel themselves to be stranded somewhere far away from where they're meant to be. The boy's beautiful face reminds the lover of the divine beauty that is forbidden to him simply because he happens to have been born.

But the lover's ordeal is only the beginning of an erotic education which will eventually turn both him and his beloved to philosophy. When Socrates tells us at the end of the palinode that “there is no greater good than this that either human *sophrosyne* or divine madness can offer a man,” he is referring to a *shared* philosophic life (256b). It isn't enough for the boy to be beautiful. It isn't even enough for his beauty to shock his lover's soul into remembering that it once beheld something divine. If the lover and the beloved are going to conduct a shared philosophic life, then the beloved must also be turned to philosophy. How?

One might imagine an alternate version of Socrates' story in which the beloved's experience runs parallel to the lover's: as the lover is yearning for the boy's body, fighting himself back, giving in, remembering Beauty, his beloved is caught up in the same struggle, and so his soul is being tested in the same way. But the relationship that Socrates envisions in the palinode is not symmetrical, at least at the outset. Rather, the lover's role is pedagogical. When the boy turns to philosophy, he does so under his lover's guidance.

Yet it is not quite right to say that the lover is a teacher and his beloved a student and that

the lover makes it his mission to edify the young one using his own worldly knowledge and the expertise of age. That model, after all, is what Lysias would endorse. The non-lover is a sort of instructor who furnishes the boy with connections and practical advice in exchange for a reasonable fee – regular access to the young, able body. The palinode's lover and beloved have no such arrangement. For one thing, even though the lover does educate the boy, it isn't clear that he does it intentionally. Instead, we'll find, the lover is compelled by his need to behold what likeness of the divine he can find here on earth. The boy is such a likeness. Still compelled by need, the lover devotes himself to training the boy to become an ever more convincing imitation of a god. He must begin by imitating that god himself. In other words, the lover educates himself as he educates his beloved. The extent to which he is aware of his compulsions and their manifestations in his actions is an open question.

The lover's pedagogical urge seems to be intrinsic to his experience of eros. Simply being close to his beloved causes the lover to overflow with divine inspiration which he then spills into the boy's soul, thus bringing them both a little closer to the gods. Then, once the lover has inflamed the beloved with inspiration, the beloved becomes a lover himself. He sees the reflection of his own godlike beauty in the lover's face and, drinking in the stream of divine beauty that flows between them, he develops what Socrates calls "*anterōs*," or mirror-love (255d). An erotic education, then, begins in accident and results in a pair of lovers who mirror both each other and at the same time the lost divine.

The task for this section is to understand in greater detail how the lover educates his beloved to philosophy, and why he does it. In answering those two questions, we will continue to respond to my original question of how eros leads to philosophy. First, we found that the eros brings the lover into temptation and thereby forces his soul to reveal itself as either capable or

incapable of philosophy. Now, we will see what else is happening as the lover's soul is struggling to negotiate its divisions – what other forces act upon him, how he acts upon the boy, and how the boy acts upon him in turn.

To begin, we will need to return to Socrates' myth. Recall that every soul once followed a particular god in a circuit around the aether. Which god the soul followed determines what sort of person that soul becomes when it falls down to earth, and in turn, how that person will go about being in love. Former attendants of Zeus will be able to bear eros “with dignity” (252c). A man who once followed Ares will “turn murderous” when he has the “slightest suspicion that the boy he loves has done him wrong,” and so on down the line. The lover with whom we are already acquainted – the one with the philosophic bent to his soul – happens to be a former follower of Zeus.

“Everyone,” Socrates says, “spends his life honoring the god in whose chorus he danced, and imitates [μιμέομαι] that god in every way he can” (252d).<sup>6</sup> We all live as imitators of what we have lost. Meanwhile, “everyone chooses his love after his own fashion from among those who are beautiful.” Imitators of Zeus seek boys who are Zeus-like themselves. When they find such a boy, they “treat [him] like their very own god, building him up and adorning him as an image [ἄγαλμα] to honor and worship.” All lovers – not just philosophic lovers – desire their particular beloveds as stand-ins for absent gods, not, for example, as exemplars of human excellence, or, as Nussbaum would say, as unique configurations of particular details. Eros is a response to the sight of infinite beauty radiating out from the finite face.

The lover who is also an imitator of Zeus seems to be singular in his desire to educate his boy. This lover will, as I've said, seek a boy who is “*philosophos* and *hegemonikos* in nature” and, once he has found him and fallen in love with him, will “do everything to make him into

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6 Substituting “imitates” for “emulates” every time a form of μιμέομαι appears.

such a sort of man.” Socrates describes the beginning of that process in the passage below, but, as we’ll see, his description will prove problematic:

If any lovers have not yet embarked on this way of living [ἐπιτηδεύματι], they start to learn, using any source they can and also making progress on their own. They are well-equipped to track down their god's true nature [τοῦ σφετέρου θεοῦ φύσιν] with their own resources because they are compelled [ἠναγκάσθαι] to gaze at the god, and as they are in touch with the god by memory they are inspired [ἐνθουσιῶντες] by him and adopt his customs and practices, so far as a human being can share a god's life. For all this they know they have the boy to thank, and so they love him all the more...(252e-253a).<sup>7</sup>

The above passage gives us some insight into how the lover leads his beloved to philosophy. The lover is “compelled” to find the “nature” of his god here in the world, and so he does. For a follower of Zeus, that means that he must find a boy who is “*philosophos* and *hegemonikos*” – which is to say, philosophic and with a gift for rule. When he finds that “nature” somehow radiating through a beautiful boy, he is also “inspired” by the god to take up his “customs and practices.” For “all this” – his inspiration, what he's learning, what he's doing – he is indebted to the boy, and so his love grows even greater. There are, however, three problems.

First off, Socrates tells us that “if any lovers have not yet embarked on this way of living, they start to learn” without specifying what exactly “this way of living” is. It may be that Socrates is referring to a *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* way of living, but he could also be referring to a pedagogical way of living. In the former case, the lover sets himself to the task of searching out the “sources” that will help him become *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* – perhaps by looking for other imitators of Zeus. But if the latter is true, then the lover trains himself to become the sort of man who can help someone else become *philosophos* and *hegemonikos*. In

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<sup>7</sup> Substituting “way of living” for “practice” and “compelled” for “compelled by need.”

that case, he would need to seek out sources that would aid him as he works to become a teacher. Socrates speaks ambiguously. Whether the lover seeks to become a *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* sort of man or a teacher is unclear. The trouble isn't that the two are mutually exclusive, because they aren't, but rather that leaving the "way of living" ambiguous leaves the question of how aware the lover is of his pedagogical role ambiguous too. It's a question that the palinode will not answer with any certainty, the reason being that the myth requires that we forget what we saw when we followed the god, and so the true reasons for what we do on earth are mostly obscure to us. We remember only intermittently that we came from somewhere else. The lover might be able to articulate his pedagogical urge and seek to hone a sort of craft – then again, he might not. We don't know.

The second problem is that Socrates does not tell us what it means to be *philosophos* and *hegemonikos*. Because those two crucial terms go unexplained, the substance of the lover's newly honed "customs and practices" will remain mysterious. While the myth can supply an origin for the lover's mysterious pedagogical urge, it is also limited in that it stops short of accounting for the strange phenomena that emerge from that urge. We know that former attendants of Zeus will seek other attendants of Zeus and that those people are identifiable by their *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* bearing. We know that the lover will cultivate those traits in himself by adopting the habits of the god. We know that if they're lucky a lover and beloved can secure for themselves the great blessing that is a philosophic life. But if we want to know what the practices of one of these miniature Zeuses would look like, then we will be frustrated. The passage describing the beginning of the education of the lover and beloved is problematic for the same reason that the entire palinode is problematic – it is incomplete. If only we knew what *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* people did, then we could become that way ourselves, by choice

rather than compulsion. We could choose to become philosophers without the necessary accident of eros and all its dangers. But Socrates' omission of practical details does not allow us to make that choice.

The third problem is that the education Socrates describes, though it may seem straightforward enough, is actually cyclical, which means that any preconceived notions we might have about the relationships between teachers and students do not exactly apply to the lover and the beloved. We know from the myth that the lover, so long as he has escaped defilement, imitates his god – in this case, that god is Zeus. If there was some (understandable) uncertainty about what it would mean to carry out a human life in imitation of a divinity, then Socrates gives a helpful explanation: the lover “adopts the customs and practices” of Zeus. But Socrates is ambiguous on the question of what causes the lover to imitate the god. At first he says that the lover “behaves” as he does, imitating, “with everyone at every turn, not just with those he loves” – in that account, he imitates the god simply because he is undefiled (252d). Then he says that the lover takes up the relevant “customs and practices” because of his desire to do everything to guide his beloved into becoming that certain kind of person himself. The issue is that Socrates also says that the lover is “well equipped” to find the sort of boy that he needs because of his connection to the god. The lover is able to search out his particular beloved from all the other beautiful boys because he is connected to their mutual god, and his pedagogical urge toward the beloved inspires him to imitate the god who he was already imitating. And so the story begins to fold in on itself. As the lover trains the beloved, the beloved becomes more godlike, thus inspiring the lover to become more godlike in turn, and so it goes without end.

There's a confusion in the palinode about what inspires whom to act which way and when. By leaving the terms of association blurred, Socrates separates the relationship of his

divinely-mad lover and beloved from the relationship of the Lysian non-lover and non-beloved. In the latter, there are clearly defined terms of exchange. The boy gives his body, and the man gives him what worldly advantages are available to him. Perhaps the boy is learning something – an established and older man might have plenty to give in the way of practical advice. But the man is neither educated by the boy (whatever that would entail) nor moved to educate himself because of the boy. His earthly desires are satisfied and he, it seems, stays the same.

The relationship between the lover and beloved is certainly not symmetrical or 'egalitarian,' but nor is it so dramatically asymmetrical as the relationship between the Lysian non-lovers nor, for that matter, as the relationship between a teacher of rhetoric and his student. The beloved is yet unformed, and the 'task' that he creates for the lover becomes the occasion for the lover's education of himself. The lover "knows that he has the boy to thank" for what he learns as he is trying to find how best to teach him. They are not 'equals,' but they are, perhaps, equally in debt.

Part of the answer to the question of how the lover leads the beloved to philosophy is that he begins by leading himself. He wants his beloved to become *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* and therefore a more convincing imitation of Zeus, and so he undertakes to be a better imitation himself. Despite whatever perplexities might arise from Socrates' mythical apparatus, it makes a certain amount of sense that one would have to know what one aims to teach, and even that one must be *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* before one can teach someone else to be that sort of person too. Socrates does not allow fools to teach fools to become lovers of wisdom. But here we hit another point of confusion. The lover is grateful to his beloved for inspiring him to adopt the habits of their god, but Socrates still has not made it at all clear whether the lover knows himself to be imitating anything at all.

It seems that he is a combination of the two. The strictures of the myth would prevent the lover from knowing that once he was a soul which in its glory days trailed behind Zeus in an endless circuit around the heavens. The soul forgets where it came from and only remembers partially at best in moments of transgression. And yet nothing prevents the lover from knowingly attaching himself to Zeus – Socrates has not invented any new gods, only given new reasons for worshiping those already familiar. If Socrates is imagining a Zeus who is characterized by love of wisdom and a gift for rule, then it is also possible that the lover might be aware that those qualities which draw him to the boy are also the mark of a Zeus-like nature. It would not even be too ridiculous for a lover to consciously seek a boy who is like Zeus – he wouldn't be the first to desire someone who seems like a god.

Yet Socrates says that the reason why the lover is able to find such a boy in the first place is because he is “compelled” to look upon the god wherever he can and from his being compelled it follows that he is also “well equipped” to fulfill that need. The lover *must* seek the image of Zeus regardless of whether or not he can articulate his compulsion in those terms. Socrates has created a world in which lovers seek beloveds because of certain subterranean longings which can never quite be coaxed out into the realm of what can be said. We might long to look upon the likeness of a god, but because our souls have forgotten where they came from, we can't know the reason for that longing. Eros brings us somewhere about halfway between knowledge and ignorance. Even if we knowingly fashion our beloveds to become images of gods, it is something of an accident that we have to do such a thing at all. Lovers become teachers under a compulsion understood only vaguely at best.

As the lover begins to adopt the practices of his patron deity, he also “draws inspiration [ἀρύτωσιν] from Zeus” and “like the Bacchants” he begins to “pour [ἐπαντλοῦντες] it into the

soul of the one he loves to make [ποίησιν] him as much like the god as possible” (253a). The Bacchic reference is slightly cryptic. Socrates could be referring to the Bacchant's curious habit of drawing milk and honey from streams, and he could also be thinking of the spread of divine intoxication from one woman to the next (Yunis 158). Both associations are at play. Socrates said earlier that the lover in the grip of divine madness “stands outside human concerns and draws close to the divine” (249c). As women maddened by Dionysus leave the city and all the petty operations of city life to hold their secret revels in the woods, the lover, himself inspired (or intoxicated, depending on how you look at it), will draw his beloved away from human concerns in order to bring him closer to the divine. In “drawing inspiration” from Zeus, the lover is performing a sort of miracle akin to making streams flow with milk and honey. When he “pours” his inspiration into the soul of his beloved, it is almost as if he is casting a spell.

The beginning of Socrates' account of erotic pedagogy is comparatively mundane. Yes, it is extraordinary to claim that the lover is compelled by god to seek a beautiful boy of a certain character and to teach him to be like Zeus, but “adopting customs and practices” is something that one can picture even though the myth stops short of saying precisely what those customs and practices are. What it would look like to “pour” inspiration from one soul into another, though, is quite mysterious. Furthermore, how “pouring” that inspiration into the boy's soul would “make [ποίησιν]” him more like Zeus is also mysterious. What does emerge clearly from all this holy obscurity is the fact that, whatever the lover *is* doing, it isn't what one would call 'instruction.' The lover “pours” some indeterminate substance from his soul into his beloved's and in doing so “makes” the boy into a certain kind of person. The word that Socrates uses for “make” is *poieō*, and though it might seem like a neutral choice, it isn't. To “make” someone into something is slightly different from teaching someone to be a certain way or training them to be capable of

certain habits. As with the English word 'make,' *poieō* can be used in the context of artistic creation. An artist finds materials and then makes them into something – the effect of the maker's hand is immediate, and the materials don't have a choice. The boy's soul is pliable and yields immediately to the lover's hand. Or, alternatively, it is as though his soul is a vessel awaiting the inspiration that the lover can pour into it and that once this has been done, he is given over entirely to the lover, as a mad Maenad is given over entirely to her god, forgetting, perhaps, what came before. Whether the beloved is a Maenad or a warm piece of clay, the central idea is that the effect of the lover on him is immediate – the hand touches and leaves a mark.

One could imagine an alternate scenario in which the lover educates his beloved through a litany of edifying discourses. Socrates tells that story in the *Symposium*, when the initiate of the Lower Mysteries of love “teems with speeches about virtue” in the presence of his beloved and so tries to “educate [παιδεύειν]” him (209b-c). But that doesn't seem to be what is happening in the palinode. Aiming to educate someone by making speeches about virtue whenever he's around is not the same as pouring inspiration into him and so making him into a miniature god, although the result might be similar – a boy who is like a god is probably also virtuous. The pedagogy of the initiate in the *Symposium* is not so profoundly intimate as that of the lover in the palinode, the reason being, I think, that it depends on *logoi* – speeches, words.

The *Phaedrus* is a dialogue about talking, and yet the vision of erotic education Socrates describes in the palinode seems to have little to do with language. Inspiration soaks the beloved unmediated. And yet Socrates says just a few moments later that when the lover finds his own proper beloved, he “persuades [πείθοντες]” him and “trains [ῥυθμίζοντες] him to follow their god's pattern and way of life” (253b). This line is unsettling for (at least) two reasons: the first is that Socrates does not tell us *how* the lover persuades the beloved, and the second is that, while

one might immediately associate persuasion with words, the word Socrates uses for “train” – *ruthmizō* – has less to do with words than with music.

The question of how one person persuades another will go without discussion until the palinode has ended, at which point Socrates and Phaedrus will speak at length about how to lead souls with words. Now, though, just as the details of what practices will make a person *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* are left indistinct, so too are the details of persuasion. Again the myth gestures at its limits. Crucial information is missing, and we have to wait until the speech is over and the discussion of rhetoric begins before we hear about it again. But the myth is not simply 'deficient.' The palinode, I think, is positing a form of persuasion that is distinct from what Socrates and Phaedrus will discuss later in the dialogue. Part of the reason why we don't hear about what sorts of words the lover will wield before his beloved is that words are of secondary importance in an erotic pedagogy based on the half-aware imitation of gods and the direct transmission of divine madness from one soul to the next.

When Socrates uses the word *ruthmizō* for what the lover does to his beloved, he does mean 'train' or 'educate,' but the word's other, musical shades are also active. To *ruthmizō* is, essentially, to 'make rhythmic.' One could also say 'bring into step.' The lover somehow persuades his beloved of something and then draws the boy into step with the rhythm of the god. We are not told how, yet the lingering image of the divinely drunk Maenads might give us a clue. The pouring of inspiration from the lover's soul into the beloved's is a form of persuasion in itself. As madness spreads from one Maenad to another, so madness spreads from lover to beloved – totally convincing, and all at once. The beloved's training occurs somewhere to the side of what is logical. His education consists not so much in being taught to think in a certain way or with certain mental tools, but to adopt a certain bearing, to step in time with a certain

barely heard divine percussion. He is persuaded perhaps by the lover's practices, by watching this man become somehow more godlike before him, and by watching and eventually imitating him, he learns.

I don't mean to claim that erotic education happens in total silence. Rather, whatever it is that the lovers are saying to each other is somehow secondary to the wordless education brought about by the spread of divine inspiration – an education more akin to the contagion of Bacchic intoxication through the woods than anything that happens in the gymnasium or in school. The palinode foregrounds that supernatural transmission of inspiration as something distinct from the persuasion that is the province of orators who do not love the ones they teach.

The persuasion and training that happen in the palinode are musical rather than strictly linguistic. The soul was once a *choreutēs* – that is, a dancer – in the chorus of a god. In Belfiore's reading, “the mortal lover attempts to rejoin this chorus in which he used to dance, imitating his own god and educating his beloved to follow the rhythm” (264). Because “dance in Ancient Greece was an important part of initiation rites,” Belfiore reads the lover's education of the boy as an education in sacred dances which ultimately becomes an initiation for both. Socrates does in fact say that the “true lover's heart's desire” is to “secure an initiation for the one he has befriended” – the boy. Lovers and beloveds recreate on earth the cosmic dances from which they have been indefinitely excluded. Erotic pedagogy is an initiation rite dependent less on *logoi* than on rhythms faraway and half-forgotten. It's a dance.

The lack of detail concerning the training of the beloved is not so much a lapse as it is an intentional exclusion of those who are unpracticed in the sacred dances of erotic initiation. If we are able to know the rites of pedagogical eros, we already do. If we don't, then we might just have to wait for someone to fall in love with us and bring us into step. Socrates' speech allows us

to come only just close enough to the initiates to recognize whether or not we are looking at ourselves. If we recognize ourselves in the lovers, then we need not go any further. If not, we can't. The palinode winks at those who already know the rites that it hints at. Meanwhile, the uninitiated will come to know themselves as such. They may not be able to hear the rhythms as the lovers do, but they can know now that there is something they are not hearing, which is more than they knew before.

The initiation rites of lovers are private and largely unmediated by *logoi*. Those private rites are parallel to the rites of rhetoric, which, when wielded rightly, might also persuade someone to become *philosophos* and *hegemonikos*. Love is a form of persuasion. In “The Rhetorical Significance of the Lover's Soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*,” John Adams argues that the boy's face is an instance of “embodied *logos*,” a “non-discursive sensual presence embodying and radiating a Platonic idea” – that is, Beauty. According to Adams, by “radiating” that divine beauty, the beloved's face persuades the lover from “*mania* to reverence” (7).

In Adam's reading, part of the reason why one learns rhetoric is to “prepare the soul to appropriately receive/observe embodied *logos* – to be able to interpret sensually evocative signifiers in morally edifying ways” (7). *Logoi* are signifiers of the divine, but so are faces. Persuasive speech is the “verbal counterpart of the natural order's divine radiance” which provokes the soul to remember Beauty. Being persuaded by the “divine radiance” of a face teaches the lover to find what is persuasive in words. “Knowledge of love and rhetoric” then come to be “dependent on each other” and learning rhetoric helps the lover to continually “interpret” the boy's face as signifying something other than its immediate appearance, something other than the person to which it is attached. In turn, the lover-rhetor's words “artfully mimic the persuasive 'face' of the natural order.”

Adams' reading sees love and rhetoric as interdependent arts of recognizing and interpreting signifiers – a face, a word – of the divine. If the lover recognizes and interprets signs 'correctly,' he will be persuaded from “*mania* to reverence.” I agree with Adams on the point that the “conversion of the lover's soul is an instance of persuasion,” though I would add that in fact the lover's “conversion” is not from *mania* to reverence but from an ordinary life to a mad one. Just as the Bacchant's madness is inseparable from her devotion, the lover's madness *is* reverence. Furthermore, while it is right to say that the beloved's face “persuades the lover,” that persuasion is fundamentally distinct from the persuasion by art, even if the result might seem to be the same – the reason being that rhetoric's persuasion, obviously, is mediated by *logoi*, and love's persuasion is as immediate as lightning's strike. The lover leans too close to the beloved and is struck by the instantly, forcefully persuasive memory of Beauty. The lover pours inspiration from the god directly into the soul of the beloved. Love's persuasion, even when it involves 'training,' is less an art than it is the uncalculated but providential deployment of forces.

As it turns out, the lover's pedagogical art is rather artless. He's only half aware of what he's doing it as he's doing it and, what's more, he is compelled by needs the nature of which the myth does not allow him to know. He is, in a word, mad. His dearest hope is to draw the beloved into being “totally like himself and the god to which they are both devoted,” and the way that he does that is by somehow spilling inspiration into the beloved's soul and by bringing him into the rhythms of the otherworldly chorus from which both have been forcibly removed. Part of the reason why the level of detail drops whenever the myth nears the province of practical 'advice' is that much of the education of the lovers happens somewhere outside the realm of what is artful, practical, what can be accomplished by intentions. Although the conversation on rhetoric and dialectic will show us visions of how to persuade, even educate, another person (with whom we

may or may not be in love), and will in some sense supply the specifics 'missing' from the palinode, the palinode does figure erotic persuasion as distinct from forms of persuasion dependent on linguistic rather than physical signs.

The crucial moment in the education of the beloved comes when he is finally struck by an eros of his own. If when the two met they were already somehow alike based on their connection to their mutual god, now they become mirror images of each other. The transmission of desire works like the transmission of inspiration, for desire, like inspiration, spills. As the lover is training his boy, spending time with him and “even touching him during sports and on other occasions,” “the spring that feeds the stream Zeus named Eros when he was in love with Ganymede begins to flow mightily in the lover” fills him totally until the stream “overflows and runs away outside him” (255b-c). For Socrates, eros is not a captive reaching vainly out from the lover's discrete being. Socrates envisions an eros with purchase on reality. Eros is as immediate as water – it touches you, and you're wet. In the universe he creates in the palinode, both divine inspiration and desire move like natural forces – physical like a wind stretching out and mussing the beloved's hair. Our compulsions have the power to overflow beyond our limits and touch someone else without any say from us.

As “a breeze or an echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source,” the beloved's own divine beauty bounces off the lover back to the beloved where it “sets him aflutter” (255c). Beauty “enters” him through “his eyes, which are its natural route to the soul” and “fills the soul of the loved one with *anterōs*” – literally, “love in return” (255d). The boy is in love, but “he does not understand, and cannot explain, what has happened to him.” He is, in other words, beside himself, unaware that he is the source of the wordless echo which stirs him. “He does not,” Socrates says, “realize that he is seeing himself in the lover as in a mirror.” Yet when

they are apart he comes to “yearn as much as he is yearned for, because he has a mirror image of love in him.” He yearns without knowing that what he yearns for is always present, simply because it is his own beauty – that same beauty which reminds his lover of divine, and which the lover bounces back to him like a breeze or an echo off of a wall. The presence of his lover allows him to see some part of himself which is comically inaccessible to him when he is on his own. And, more comically still, he wants to “touch, kiss, and lie down” with the lover, even though what he desires in the lover is actually his own beauty. Lover and beloved, then, come to desire precisely the same thing – the divine beauty of the boy, which is to say, the human reflection of beauty itself.

The lover, we know, has already gone through quite a struggle to keep his himself from springing on the boy like a four-footed beast. Now he will have to repeat the ordeal, this time with the added complication of the boy's *anterōs* making the whole thing, one imagines, far more painful than it was when the beloved merely was an inert body awaiting approach. The boy's bad horse, yet unbroken, “has nothing to say, but swelling with desire, confused, it hugs the lover and kisses him in delight at his great good will” (255e-256a). The boy's unruly actor would be, we hear, “completely unable...to deny the lover any favor he might beg to have.” Earlier the lover suffered through his struggle alone – now the beloved joins him, magnifying the difficulty by his sudden reciprocal warmth. And now, “if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds,” they follow together the “assigned regime of philosophy” and “their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding.” Only after the lover has endured and somehow ordered his private aches, only after the beloved has been soaked by inspiration and felt the breeze of his own beauty blow back to him and inflame his soul with *anterōs*, mirror love, do the pair 'officially' turn to philosophy. They have both been persuaded by the strange, divine forces

overflowing from each other. Those forces – those waters, those winds – have educated them.

The story of the palinode ends with what Belfiore calls “an infinite series of reflections” (234). “The reflected stream of beauty,” she writes, “nourishes the soul of the beloved, helping to create a new and more beautiful self, which, in turn, nourishes the soul of the lover.” The beloved becomes increasingly more beautiful by absorbing the stream of his own beauty, and the lover, by reflecting that beauty back to him, also comes to seem more beautiful in his turn. The two are continually being “defined and created by the love they create in each other.” Meanwhile, through his association with the boy, the lover continues to teach himself to be more like the god in whose chorus they both once danced, while also training the beloved, which is to say, bringing him into the rhythm of those forgotten and divine dances. Both lover and beloved become increasingly more beautiful and more divine the more time they spend together, beaming divine beauty back and forth.

By the time the lovers embark on the assigned regime of philosophy, they have become mirrors of each other, and now, of the god. Their education consists of the transmission of madness back and forth until the beloved becomes a lover both of a man and finally of wisdom. They come to follow the “assigned regime of philosophy” through their exchanges and imitations, by learning to step in time with the rhythm of the god. As we might have expected to learn something about what it would mean to be *philosophos* earlier, we might now expect to learn something about the “regime of philosophy” – a practical guide would be nice – but we won't.

To assume that the discussion of dialectic that follows will supply the detail missing from the palinode would be to miss the mark. Erotic persuasion and education are complete in themselves, even if Socrates does not reveal the details that initiates already know. We will find

in the next section that the education dialecticians have to offer is essentially different from the education of lovers. For now though, I will say with Belfiore that one of the distinct qualities of an erotic education is that it ends in a closed circuit of endless reflections. Her original formulation is as follows:

The image of the mirror differs in an important respect from that of the man with the dialectical *techne* who sows in another soul words accompanied by knowledge that can in turn be passed on to another soul. In the mirror image, and in the imitative process it illustrates, there is no suggestion that a way of life is transmitted from lover to beloved, who in turn will transmit it to his own beloved (235).

The beloved “transmits” a “way of life” to the lover by inspiring him to imitate the god. The lover then “transmits” that same “way of life” back to him by bringing him into rhythm with that god. The dialectician, in contrast, will sow knowledge in the souls of his students, who may then do the same to their students. The erotic-pedagogical relationship is a circuit, and the dialectical-pedagogical relationship is a chain. The former depends on overwhelming forces sloshing over the boundaries of one individual into the next; the latter depends on the sowing of words. Lovers come to exist in a sort of private world, remaining a pair, it seems, for the rest of their lives. Erotic education happens only two at a time.

We can make some response now to the question of how the lover leads the beloved to philosophy. First, under the compulsion of Zeus, he finds him. Once he has found this boy – beautiful, promising, alluringly unfinished – he is inspired to “do everything” to make him into a *philosophos* and *hegemonikos* miniature Zeus. He begins by teaching himself to become either that sort of man or the sort of man who would be able to teach someone else to become *philosophos* and *hegemonikos*. We find out that he “adopts the customs and practices” of his

patron divinity, though the myth offers little in the way of explanation for anyone curious as to what that might entail because, if you are an initiate, you already know. Furthermore, the strictures of the myth do not allow the lover to become fully aware of what he is doing as he is doing it. He cannot know that he was once a *choreutēs* who reveled in the chorus of the god, and yet despite that he still proceeds to reinstate the rhythms of that chorus in this lower world by training his beloved to step in time with them. He – divine madman – acts out of need and in only partial awareness. Like a Bacchant he draws inspiration from the divine and spills it directly into the soul of the beloved, not so much instructing him as filling and thereby creating him, working somewhere to the side of language. When the lover's eros begins to spill from him unchecked and washes over his beloved, the beloved fills with love in return. Each becomes a mirror of the other and, indirectly, an earthly reflection of the divine. When each has broken the unruly, lascivious aspect of their eros, the pair come to practice philosophy together.

As for the question of why the lover leads the beloved to philosophy, some part of the answer is already available: he is “compelled” to “track down his god's true nature” where he can find it so long as he is stranded here on earth. But why does his compulsion to seek out and gaze upon the god pronounce itself in his pedagogical urge? The boy is already godlike when he befalls the lover. Why is it not enough to stand inert in distant reverence? Why is eros, already reverent and lustful (an uneasy combination if ever there was one), also pedagogical?

In the world of the Socrates' myth, no one is in the right place. When the lover finds his godlike darling, his desire is not for what is 'human' in him, but for the image of absent divinity. Eros in the *Phaedrus*, like eros in the *Symposium*, is a form of lack, but here it is a particular form of lack – nostalgia, longing for home. Socrates' myth tells us that when we are born, the tragedy has already happened. The impossible situation is already, inescapably at hand. From

that impossible situation, eros arises – our tragic birthright.

When the lover is compelled to seek the god in the face of a boy, he is essentially being drawn back to a home which is unavailable to him. Lover and beloved are both strangers, first to this world and then, once their divine madness transports them beyond “human concerns,” to everyone else who lives in it. Every pair of philosophic lovers creates another, private world within this one, a hidden and perpetually inadequate semblance of the divine beyond to which all long to return. It is not enough to live in this hidden home merely beholding each other, merely being in love. Even as the two live out their days imbibing the stream of beauty which flows constantly between them, they also desire a wisdom which remains always out of reach. Philosophy happens because the world is not enough.

## III

“Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire.”

Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*

In their education to philosophy, the lovers become attuned to the fact that they have been misplaced. The baroque apparatus of Socrates' mythic universe accounts for that strange sensation that the place where we ought to be is not where we are. From that mute attunement to another world emerges love of wisdom. Of course, most people don't feel the soul's tug back to its rightful home. They treat beautiful bodies as though they were only bodies, not as the earthly images of the divine that they really are. A man whose soul has not been weakened by corruption will draw just close enough to a boy to be reminded of Beauty itself and beaten back. A man whose soul has been defiled by earthly life will come to close too quickly and so will fail to be reminded. Sex precludes philosophy because it precludes remembrance.

Erotic education is set into motion by longings so subterranean that they seem to descend upon us from without and as if by chance. According to Socrates, our compulsions toward each other have roots in a forgotten world, and in fact, only seem to be compulsions toward other humans – the truth is that we are compelled by longing for the divine. Philosophy is accidental in that the reasons to practice it are unavailable to us. Lovers are driven to philosophize – they need not know why, and they don't even need to know that philosophy is what they're doing. They simply must. To declare that one aspires to be a philosopher would be to make a rather useless remark, for one's intentions are beside the point. But when the boy's beauty does remind the lover's soul of the divine, the lover will be able to lead them both a little closer to what they've lost, so far as such fallen beings are able. His pedagogical eros is ultimately a compulsion to keep seeing what he saw when the human boy's godlike beauty reminded him of beauty itself. Because he cannot behold the divine as he once did, he will behold its human approximation,

and, while he's at it, he will inspire that approximation to become ever better, which is to say, more divine. Education arises from a longing which cannot finally be fulfilled. The lovers long to behold the gods they once followed and to see the undefiled Beauty they once saw in their circuit around the heavens, but all they have are imitations. No matter how convincing, how beautiful, those imitations become, the fact remains that to behold a godlike human is not to behold a god. The lovers become philosophers because as long as they are trapped in bodies on earth their longing to look again upon the divine will go unfulfilled.

And yet the *Phaedrus* does not end with the palinode. The discussion of rhetoric which follows the end of Socrates' great speech will be concerned with *technē*, or art. Rhetoric is a “*technē*” of “*psychagōgia*” – that is to say, an art of leading souls. We will find that Socrates' vision of rhetoric is dangerously intimate, including in effect every sort of utterance, not just speeches given in public concerning public matters. Because “*psychagōgia*” is the “*dynamis*” or inherent power of all “*logoi*,” words spoken in any circumstance are capable of moving the souls of those listening in whatever direction suits the speaker (271c). It is in the nature of speech to be pedagogical, whether or not it is intended to be so. We are always at risk of being education.

This is something of a problem. The overwhelming majority of speakers are bad teachers, the reason being that they lack knowledge of the true *technē* of talk – dialectic. On its own, the so-called 'art' of rhetoric will prove problematic and, finally, artless. It is only when it is folded into the practice of the dialectician that it ceases to be, if not a rather useless skill, at least one that is incomplete. Rhetoricians only know how to put one word after the other, but not necessarily when to use them, or whom to use them on. A student of a Gorgias or Tisias or Thrasymachus will learn the verbal equivalent of how to “produce the highest and lowest notes” on the strings of a lyre without knowing anything of “harmony itself” (268d-e). Dialectic

requires that one know how to touch the instrument in such a way that it makes a noise, but it also requires that the dialectician work to acquire a certain theoretical knowledge. It is the union of knowledge and technical finesse that makes the dialectician a truly artful and truly persuasive speaker.

From the discussion of the art of dialectic and Socrates' subsequent critique of writing emerges at last a definition of philosophy. Just before the end of the dialogue Socrates tells us that a lover of wisdom

believes that at their very best [written words] can only serve as reminders to those who already knew. And he also thinks that only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, beautiful, and good can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention: such *logoi* should be called his own legitimate children, first the *logos* he may have discovered already within himself and then its sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls insofar as these are worthy...(278a).<sup>8</sup>

The defining belief of the philosopher is that everything you'd ever need to know concerning the sacred trifacta of the just, beautiful, and good is already “written in the soul.” The best words – written or spoken – are reminders of what we carry around all the time without knowing it. The philosopher is one who devotes himself to relearning how to read something written in a language he has forgotten. The *logoi* he begets for the sake of learning the *logos* of the soul are his children. Eventually he causes such *logoi* to grow in other, worthy souls. “Such a man, Socrates tells Phaedrus, “would be just what you and I both would pray to become” (278b).

Philosophy is the search for signs that will incite the soul to the remembrance of dormant knowledge. Because the dialectician is concerned with the art of speaking well and with

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8 Substituting “beautiful [καλῶν]” for “noble.”

knowledge, we might assume that there exists some bond between dialectic and philosophy. Perhaps the best dialecticians are philosophers. Plato invites such assumptions by delaying Socrates' 'definition' of philosophy until after the discussion of dialectic. Philosophy has been at stake for the duration of the dialogue, but Socrates only tells us what it is after we've spent some time talking about words – we might therefore assume that philosophy by nature involves words. But the palinode has shown us that one does not necessarily need to speak in order to prompt remembrance. The lover receives such a jolt from the soul simply by drawing close to the beloved's silent beauty. If philosophy is the pursuit of remembrance, then the lovers philosophize by beholding each other.

Socrates seems to be suggesting that if one is not so lucky as to be able to spend one's time gazing at a beautiful boy, then one can seek out and speak words that will have the same effect as beholding a face. Indeed, one could read the palinode and the discussion of dialectic as containing two separate accounts of education to philosophy – one erotic and the other non-erotic. Given the unpredictable nature of erotic education, a non-erotic education has some appeal. If some determined and enterprising individual decided that he wanted to be a philosopher, perhaps he could undertake to master a *technē* that would allow him to achieve his goal without needing to wait for some providential accident to befall him and drive him out of his wits. Dialectic seems to be such an art. The question for this section is whether or not *technē* alone is sufficient for philosophy.

To put it differently, the task is to determine whether or not the *Phaedrus* allows for the possibility of a non-erotic education to philosophy. When Socrates is assembling the myth that will structure the world of the palinode, he tells us that “no soul returns to the place from which it came for ten thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for the soul of

man who practices philosophy without guile [ἀδολῶς] or loves boys philosophically” (248e-249a). He goes on to describe in great detail what it would mean to love boys philosophically, but this guileless practitioner of philosophy remains a mysterious figure. It isn't clear whether Socrates is talking about two distinct sorts of philosophers, or halves of the same man – it may be that there is one sort of man who does philosophy by being in love, and another sort that does philosophy 'guilelessly' without any sort of erotic attachment to another person. Another way of framing our task is as a response to the question of whether or not the guileless philosopher and the philosophic lover of boys are necessarily the same man.

The first order of business is to understand what it is that a dialectician does. When Socrates introduces the term, he says that a dialectician is one who is “capable of discerning a single thing that is capable of encompassing many” (266b). In order to discern that single thing, he uses a “*technē*” of “divisions and collections” (265d, 266b). The art of dialectic involves first separating things that do not belong together, as Socrates does when he divides divine madness from the sort of madness that Lysias was so concerned about avoiding in his speech. Dialectic also requires that one be able to “see together things that are scattered about everywhere and collect them into one kind” (265d). Those two skills – dividing and collecting – form the whole of the dialectician's *technē*. Together they allow him to “make clear the subject of any instruction he wishes to give” (265).

Dialecticians, then, practice their art in order that they might teach. All words have an inherent pedagogical power, whether or not the speaker has any explicit pedagogical intent. Dialecticians, though, are deliberate teachers who use their facility with divisions and collections in order to speak clearly and therefore persuasively. Socrates names his own great speech as an example of such clarity. He separated the forms of madness that did not belong together (and

which Lysias unfairly confused) so that “whether its definition was or was not correct,” the speech could “proceed clearly and consistently with itself” (265d). Dialecticians are able to produce speeches that are consistent despite the problematic fact that consistency does not necessarily equal truth.

More problematic still is the fact that the dialectician's knowledge of the “nature of the soul” will ensure that he “determines which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul” so that he can “arrange his speech accordingly” (277b-c). He can also “give instructions concerning the reasons why one kind of soul is necessarily convinced by one kind of speech while another necessarily remains unconvinced” (271b). Dialecticians create consistent speeches that are appropriate for the audience. One of the more confounding aspects of the discussion of *technē* is the fact that, although dialecticians must have knowledge in order for their art to be persuasive, Socrates does not demand that they speak the truth. As Yunis writes in “Eros in Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Shape of Greek Rhetoric,” because the central aim of dialectic is *psychagōgia*, “when it is rhetorically expedient to obscure the truth, [the dialectician] is expected to do that, and his dialectically acquired knowledge of the truth will enable him to do it effectively” (104).

The dialectician, then, differs from the ineffectual rhetor in that the former has the knowledge to make his speeches almost infallibly efficient and the latter does not. Their final aims, though, are the same – to speak persuasively. What changes from the rhetor to the dialectician is, then, not the goal, but the labor. Manuals of style won't be able to put up much of a fight against the obstacles that Socrates has erected between the hopeful speech-maker and true rhetorical success. “No one,” he says, “will ever possess the art of speaking, to the extent that any human being can, unless he acquires the ability to enumerate the sorts of characters to be

found in any audience, to divide everything according to its kinds, and to grasp each single thing firmly by means of one form” (273d-e). A dialectician, simply put, must have mastered the art of divisions and collections, and must have knowledge not only of the nature of the soul but also the nature of things at large.

It's quite an undertaking. Unlike the rules that one might find in manuals of style, the requirements for the true art of speaking elude mastery. Socrates implies as much when he says that “no one will ever possess the art of speaking, *to the extent that any human being can* [my emphasis].” A speech by a man without the dialectician's rare knowledge would be totally artless, and yet, the necessary knowledge can only ever be incomplete. The art of speaking cannot actually be “possessed” in full, and in fact, the art demands more of the speaker than it is able to provide. Although Socrates says that the dialectician can pick up the sort of knowledge he needs by “listening to discussions in school,” schooling is insufficient (271e). One who has learned the different types of soul, for instance, must also be able to “discern each kind clearly as it occurs in the actions of real life” (271d). Furthermore, as Griswold writes, “he must be able to administer the *pharmakon* of rhetoric in just the right dose, at and for the right time; he must compose wholes of discourse; and by means of beautiful discourses he must remind the soul of the Ideas” (189). Even the dialectician who merely wishes to persuade someone of something, not necessarily remind the soul of anything, must have what Griswold calls a “true *epistēmē*,” or knowledge, which “goes beyond the *technē* [Socrates] actually outlines.”

Griswold finds in the discussion of dialectic “an underlying tension between the tremendous demands placed on the art of rhetoric...and the character of rhetoric as an *art*.” According to his reading, the discussion of dialectic “point of the limits of *technē* even as it praises *technē*” (189). In so doing, the discussion also gestures at its own limits. The dialectician

must have knowledge beyond the scope of art, but the near total absence of myth following the end of the palinode means that we don't know what the necessary knowledge would be. In the context of the palinode, to know the soul would be to know (even obliquely) that it is “immortal” and that its existence in the mortal world is a sort of cosmic mistake (245c). To be able to “grasp each single thing by means of one form” would be, perhaps, to recognize the worldly imitations of Justice, *Sophrosyne*, Knowledge, and everything else the soul saw when it was following its god (247d). In the discussion of dialectic, though, the world has become so tightly restricted that we don't know what it would mean to “grasp each single thing by means of one form” – we don't know what a form is. Nor are we given any clear idea of how one would go about classifying the different varieties of souls – we would have to turn back to the mythical schema of the palinode. The dialectical discussion, then, does not – perhaps cannot – account for its own requisite knowledge on its own terms. *Technē* can't account for *technē*.

Not only does the knowledge necessary for the true art of speaking elude mastery, it also seems to elude dialectic. We know that one can acquire at least some aspect of dialectic's requisite knowledge by going to school and listening to discussions, but the rest of that knowledge, which may be experiential, is won by means yet unknown. One wonders if it can be taught at all, and how precisely one would know that one had mastered it. What it would mean for a speaker to possess knowledge grows increasingly vague. So long as there can be no complete knowledge for a mortal, the speaker will not quite lead his audience correctly, however fine his intentions may be. We are resigned to be led by *logoi* spoken on the basis of incomplete knowledge.

And we should be worried, for we will find that a speech need not tell the truth in order to be deemed effective. If we want an example of a fine speech that is nevertheless misleading, we

need not look any further than the palinode. That speech “proceeded clearly and consistently itself,” and yet Socrates says that although he succeeded in using one “certain image to describe love's passion,” and perhaps “it had some truth in it,” it “may also have led us astray” (265b). He is unsure. It's no insult to say that Socrates' knowledge of souls and everything else in the world might be imperfect – he isn't a god. But perhaps we were persuaded by the speech and are now deflated by the rhetor's gesture of uncertainty. We've also found ourselves in a disturbing predicament. It is the inherent power of words to lead souls and souls are, Socrates implies, incorrigibly warm to the touch of language. The problem isn't that Socrates has duped us. It isn't so simple as that. The problem is that not only is the reader prompted to reflect on her experience of persuasion in sudden doubt, but that the speaker also doubts himself. What he said might have had some truth in it – then again, perhaps not. The dialectical art's standards of clarity and consistency do not help us. Words can lead speaker and audience astray at the same time.

Yet neither Socrates nor, I think, Plato is saying something quite so simple as 'words don't work.' So far, Socrates has only treated dialectic in the context of intentional persuasion. A man would go about the ordeal of mastering the different sorts of souls because he “intends to be a rhetorician,” or, in other words, to speak persuasively (271c). Dialectic is at this point a tool one would use to convince someone of something – a tool that is dearly won, but a tool nonetheless. What is truly bizarre about the dialectician is that he would not make the “laborious effort” of acquiring his rare knowledge “in order to speak and act among human beings, but so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible” (273e). And so, while the intended purpose of dialectic seems to be to lead the souls of human beings, no one in his right mind would devote himself to such an undertaking were he solely concerned with the merely human. The dialectician – odd creature – takes up his vocation because of some as yet

inexplicable orientation toward the divine.

Here we might detect an echo of the palinode. As the lover in his madness comes to “stand outside human concerns and draw close to the divine,” so the dialectician aims to “speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible” (249c-d). In the palinode, we can account for the lover's turn away from human concerns, insofar as one can account for madness – he is “possessed by god [ἐνθουσιάζων].” Socrates gives no such reason for the dialectician's strange tilt. Here merely tells us that “wiser people than ourselves...say that a reasonable man must put his mind to being pleasant not to his fellow slaves (though this may happen as a side effect) but to his masters, who are wholly good” (273e-274a). Right now we can only say that one would turn away from human affairs on the basis of what has been said by people “wiser than ourselves.” By what measure we might judge someone as wise, we don't know, but it seems highly problematic to deem a man wise based on his words, for words, we know, do not check themselves. Socrates has made it quite clear that we ought to be on our guard around *logoi*, but can give us no more certain basis for taking up dialectic than what some unspecified “wiser people” have said.

The essential difficulty of the discussion of dialectic is this: the dialectical *technē* cannot on its own terms give a reason why anyone ought to pursue it. If a man simply wishes to speak well for the sake of political or monetary or any sort of 'human' gain, then he will not have the necessarily tilt toward the divine that would make him seek the knowledge he needs to speak with any amount of art. Such a man will never become a dialectician. Even a man who wishes to learn dialectic for the sake of dialectic will fail. Only the man who seeks knowledge of both the soul and the nature of things at large for the sake of pleasing the gods will become a truly artful speaker. We need to look outside the scope of *technē* in order to understand the dialectician's

compulsion to cultivate it.

Ultimately, we will need to look back to the palinode. The discussion of dialectic ends with Socrates and Phaedrus agreeing that they have said enough about “artfulness and artlessness” in speaking, not that they have found trapdoor into philosophy. While it becomes clear later in the dialogue that dialectic can be instrumental in the practice of philosophy, whether or not that is necessarily the case is, I think, ambiguous. Dialectic alone does not constitute philosophy. If there can be a non-erotic education to philosophy, *technē* alone is insufficient to that education, because *technē* alone can't supply or even explain the impetus to look beyond the known world to the 'something *else*' which is ultimately the province of philosophy. In the *Phaedrus*, the best explanation that we are given for the existence of philosophy is in the palinode, in which all who live are exiles, and the philosophers are the ones who are trying to get back home.

The lover brings his beloved into rhythm with the divine out of a longing to behold something lost. Because we are mortals exiled to the finite world, we can't gaze as gods do directly upon pure Beauty, pure Justice, pure *Sophrosyne*. Instead, we look for those cracks in the world through which those pure things still shine. A beautiful face is one of those cracks. When the lover beholds the divine beauty that radiates from his beloved's body, he goes mad, and in his madness he turns away from human concerns back to the divine. There is, then, an erotic answer to the question of why one would speak and act with an eye on the gods, but no non-erotic answer. The implication is that there is no reason to go after the sort of knowledge one needs in order to be an artful speaker unless one has already felt eros and its pull back to the other world.

Of course, the palinode was a speech made by a mortal speaker with an imprecise hold on the truth, and so it is possible – if not probable – that we have been misled by Socrates' account

of eros. But even though we know that the speech's very author has misgivings about the story that it tells, the palinode still provides the only explanation for the philosopher's divine bent. The *Phaedrus* will not ultimately give us any sure footing from which we can announce exactly what it is that makes a philosopher, for it undermines its own claim on the truth at every turn. Initiates like the ones Socrates describes in the palinode may read it and see their reflections in the lovers and know that story to be true. The rest, though, are left with a dilemma – we need the speech despite the fact that it might have led us, might right *now* be leading us astray. What the *Phaedrus* needs in a reader is an ambivalence to match its own. Any argument about the relationship between the palinode and the discussion of dialectic will have to hold in mind one of the great difficulties of this dialogue, which is that its pervasive anxiety about the validity of any *logos* should prevent us taking anything that Socrates says as doctrine, as earnest, as true. As long as we are uninitiated into the rites of philosophic love, then we will have to wander inside this difficulty or dismiss the dialogue altogether.

The *Phaedrus*, then, suggests that eros is a solution to the problem of words, while simultaneously demanding that we do not trust that solution because it came to us in a speech. And yet it seems that eros could solve that difficulty too. Perhaps the sight of a beautiful face leaning towards ours would make us recover some bright fragment of all that we have forgotten. Perhaps then we would come to know ourselves as the exiles that the *Phaedrus* says that we are. If only we could be struck by such beauty as the lover sees in his boy, then we could say that, yes, the palinode *is* right to insist that we ourselves hover at the crest of transgression, that we ourselves be thrust on our backs by the force of our own souls protesting our bodies, that it is not enough simply to avoid danger, that the written account in this book by Plato ultimately asks that we put the book away and await the accident of remembrance, of philosophy. If only all that

should happen, then we would know whether eros is in fact the solution to the problem of language. The *Phaedrus* provides no assurance of its claims. We have to look outside the scope of its terms in order to test them – in our own lives and our own desires in our fallen world.

If words are not enough for us, then words are also not enough for the dialectician. He too must be a lover. But that is not to say that a lover is necessarily a dialectician. It seems that art needs eros if it is going to have anything to do with philosophy, but eros doesn't necessarily need art. As long as philosophy is essentially the search for the signs that spark remembrance of the divine, then the lover need only behold what Adams calls the “embodied *logos*” of the beloved's face in order to 'do' philosophy (7). Lovers don't need to speak, artfully or otherwise, to remember what they've forgotten. Nor do they need a *technē* of persuasion in order to lead each other's souls. They simply spill.

The difference between the *psychagōgia* of lovers and the *psychagōgia* of dialecticians is one of intention – lovers are moved to teach by compulsion, and dialecticians by choice. The lover, remember, “draws inspiration from Zeus” and “pours” it directly into the soul of the beloved in order to “make him as much like the god as possible” (253a). Madness flows from lover to boy without deliberation as intoxication spreads between Maenads in the woods. The dialectician, however, works upon his student deliberately. He “chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it *logoi* accompanied by knowledge” (276e). One decides what sort of seed to plant and then plants it with care – a space must be dug, the seed covered, tended according to the clock, managed. Inspiration is a more volatile substance, and pouring a messier operation. The lover and beloved are like two full cups whose contents happen to spill over into each other because of disturbances in the ground. Dialecticians, though, are as deliberate and methodical as farmers.

Deliberate as he may be, we don't know how the dialectician chooses the *logos* he plants in the soul of his student. We know that the seed is “accompanied by knowledge,” but how one would tell the seed that has been planted with knowledge from one planted without knowledge is finally ambiguous. The dialectician's *psychagōgia* is indistinguishable from the *psychagōgia* of artless sophists. Because the dialectician can use his art either “in order to teach or in order to persuade,” we can't be quite sure of which one he's doing at any given time, nor ultimately how pedagogy is to be distinguished from persuasion when both depend on words.

The dialectician requires eros in order to cultivate the orientation toward the divine that is necessary for his vocation, and yet his methods do not quite correspond to the lover's (if the lover can even be said to have methods). The relationship between the two figures remains unclear, and, because of that, the relationship between the palinode and the discussion of rhetoric is also unclear. Planting a *logos* in someone does not seem to be the same thing as prompting someone to remember the *logos* that was in him already, even though Socrates says that the man who has been given the dialectician's *logos* with knowledge is “happy as any human being can be” (277a). Both the operations of the lover and the dialectician result in blessed lives for themselves, and their beloveds or students. Their activities are at once analogous and fundamentally distinct.

Because of the significant difference in method between the lover and the dialectician, it would be a mistake to say that, because dialecticians seem to need eros to become what they are, that the lover of the palinode and the dialectician are the same man. Adams grafts the two figures together when he writes that the story of the lovers is an allegory in which “one may read the beloved as a trope for Platonic eloquence as a discourse that erotically draws the fallen soul toward its Truth with radiant, not cosmetic speech” (11). That is to say, the “embodied *logos*” of the beloved's face works in much the same way as a spoken *logos* would, and falling in love

becomes a metaphor for persuasion. In this allegorical reading, the “noble lover/rhetorician” aims to “provoke his beloved's soul to reverent remembrance” by means of words that are “the verbal counterpart of the natural order's divine radiance” (9). Speaking comes to have the same effect as desire when the lover learns to speak words that have the same effect as his boy's natural radiance. The lover/rhetorician aims to do to the boy with words what the boy does to him with his beautiful face.

Adams' reading of the *Phaedrus* maps the discussion of dialectic onto the palinode. Rather than reading the speech and the discussion as two distinct accounts of how philosophy might be done, Adams reads them as complements of each other. The lover is simultaneously educated in the art of words and provoked to remembrance by his beloved's beauty, which is to say that he becomes a “student of Plato's ideal rhetoric” as he becomes a lover. Furthermore, becoming educated in art “prepares [his] soul to appropriately receive/observe embodied *logos*” (7). The difference between a word and a face is, Adams writes, “the difference between the two sites where *logos* is manifest.” The manner in which faces and words persuade is essentially the same, only in one case the *logos* is embodied and in the other it is spoken. Learning to “interpret” what Adams calls the “sensually evocative signifier” of the beloved's face in “morally edifying ways” makes the lover a better speaker – better able to persuade his beloved to “reverence.” Love *is* an education in rhetoric. Rhetoric *is* education in love.

The problem with Adams' reading is that it holds persuasive words and faces to act in the same way. The lover/rhetorician's “rhetorical words artfully mimic the persuasive 'face' of the natural order.” Despite the fact that the face is 'natural' and the word man-made, there is no great difference between their effects, even though we know from the discussion of dialectic that all words, even those spoken by one who knows the truth, are prone to mislead (262c-d). A face,

however, is not. The beloved's face radiates divine beauty and the lover is 'persuaded' by that beauty when the sight of the boy causes him to remember what pure beauty his soul once saw before he fell into this world. It isn't the beloved's choice to wield his beauty for the purpose of the lover's 'moral edification.' His beauty simply *is*. A rhetorician, on the other hand, chooses his words deliberately and, because he cannot but make that choice with imperfect knowledge, his words always have the potential to lead the soul astray.

There is, then, a crucial difference between persuading someone to reverence with a speech and provoking someone to remembrance with the beauty of one's face. Even if one speaks words accompanied by knowledge, sowing a seed in the soul is not the same as inciting that soul to remember its own forgotten *logos*. In the first case, a dialectician places something in the student which was not there before. In the second, the soul remembers divine Beauty of its own accord. How planting something new in the soul would prompt it to remembrance of what it already knows is ambiguous. As long as philosophy is the search for signs to spark the memory, then the place of *logoi* in an education to philosophy will also be ambiguous. Instead of imagining a seamless union between *logoi* and love in a philosophic life, we should preserve the distinction between beauty's accidental provocation and the deliberate persuasion of the word.

Because the palinode and the discussion of dialectic are concerned with two distinct forms of *psychagōgia*, they should be treated as distinct themselves. Adams makes the palinode into an allegory for education in *technē*. Asmis makes a similar argument in “*Psychagogia* in Plato's *Phaedrus*,” namely, that the palinode is 'completed' by the dialectical discussion which follows. She accounts for the similarities between the lover and the dialectician by saying that “genuine rhetoric” and “genuine love” are “as one” in that they both have the effect of leading the beloved listener to “self-knowledge” through the genuine lover-rhetorician's “knowledge of

the soul” (157). The palinode and the discussion of dialectic are again treated as complementary. One account of *psychagōgia* supplies the detail missing in the other, for “myth is but a step toward understanding” and it needs to be “complemented by rational, dialectical examination if it is to be part of a genuine philosophical search” (165). The palinode's incomplete view of the world is thus completed by the ensuing discussion. Eros is 'completed' by dialectic in turn.

Asmis' reading treats the palinode – and, in effect, eros – as something deficient which must be completed by the discussion of dialectic. But eros does not need dialectic in order to be part of a “genuine philosophical search.” By leading the lover close enough to the boy to be shocked into remembrance of the lost other world, eros *is* in itself a genuine philosophical search. It isn't desire that's deficient, but *technē*. It's the “rational, dialectic examination” that can't account for the necessity of its existence. Eros shows the lover that he walks among fragments of what pure, whole things he once saw, and so reminds him that there do exist single forms according to which all those fragments might be divided and collected. On its own, without desire's strange knowledge, dialectic can only speak to us – truly or falsely – about this world. And this world, we know, is not enough.

We began with the question of whether or not the *Phaedrus* allows for the possibility of a non-erotic education to philosophy. The answer, it seems, is no. Dialectic alone is inadequate, for it requires too great a labor for one who only wishes to act and speak well as a man among men – one must already have the desire to please the gods. One must already stand apart from the mortal world. But Socrates does not account for the dialectician's tilt toward the divine in the discussion of dialectic, and indeed, without the mythical infrastructure of the palinode, there is no accounting for it. The dialectician is a lover who, feeling himself to be a stranger in this world, seeks knowledge in order to come closer to what he has lost. A lover, though, is not

necessarily a dialectician. If philosophy is the search for remembrance, then beholding the godlike face of a beautiful beloved is philosophy in itself.

But the *Phaedrus* is, if nothing else, worried about words, and so we too should be worried. Plato – a slippery character if ever there was one – might lead us astray. Certainly reading a dialogue about what happens when a certain sort of person beholds a beautiful face is a poor substitute for actually doing it. If Socrates has persuaded us that philosophy is worth our time, then we should hope to fall in love. To that end we might pray with the chorus of the *Hippolytus*,

Eros Eros who over the eyes  
 drips longing, who leads sweet grace  
 into the souls of those he marches against,  
 may you not appear to me with evil,  
 and may you not come out of turn (525-529),

and if we should be so lucky as to be driven mad by sudden, implacable longing for another world, then we, initiated, will know whether or not the *Phaedrus* does in fact speak the truth about where we are going and where we have been.

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