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“Oh, Phaedrus, if I don’t know my Phaedrus I must be forgetting who I am myself”:
Glimpses of Self in Divine Erotic Madness

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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To Greg,

For all the favors that made this project possible.



We have no sense for his elsewhere head,
 in which the eyes' pupils contract. And yet
 his torse still glows under his gaze
 like the embers of a snuffed candle

still issuing and shining, only dimmed. For how else
 could the contours of his chest blind you, and how else
 in the subtle slope of the lumbar could a smile form
 curling toward that source which bore the figures'
 witnessing.

Otherwise this stone would stand misshapen and partial
 under the apparent plummet of the shoulders
 and wouldn't gleam like a leopard's pelt

and wouldn't emanate beyond all its edges
 like starlight: for there isn't a point
 which doesn't see you. You must change your life.

-Rainer Marie Rilke

Introduction

What is self-knowledge as it is depicted in Plato's *Phaedrus*, and how does one truly attain it? Prefiguring this question in two parts may already be misleading. A conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus about rhetoric that transforms into an account for the nature of eros, I read as a metaphoric account for the art of philosophy and the philosophical life. The philosopher's desire for self-knowledge, I offer, is the driving force of such an art and life. I argue that on the Platonic account, true self-knowledge can only occur upon death, when the philosopher's soul returns to its most natural state of being, provided that one has lived appropriately enough for their soul to make such an ascent to heaven. Essential to such a life is what Socrates calls "eros." I aim to show that dividing self-knowledge between a 'what' and a 'how' is misleading. In the language of the *Phaedrus*, the philosopher who is in possession of eros is greeted, so to speak, by an image of divine Beauty and recollects a sense of 'what' they are and 'what' is truly best for them, which is to say they gain insight into their true, immortal divine nature and the actual objects their nature really, truly desires most in life—Truth. The

direction forward, the 'how', is thus clear to the philosopher; a life honoring truth is the most fulfilling life the philosopher can conceive for their (heart)broken soul, which must endure a life existentially separated from what it loves most of all. This is to argue, then, that a life characterized by one's own searching for the best life to live is in itself emblematic of the good, philosophical life. By doing so throughout life, upon death the wings of the philosopher's soul will have been fully restored to health, and their immortal soul will be able to once again rejoin its one true love in heaven. In this sense, 'what' self-knowledge apprehension *is* on earth amounts to a call to action for the philosopher until the time comes when the soul can wholly apprehend itself qua itself.

For reasons that will become apparent, to unearth self-knowledge in the *Phaedrus* I start at the beginning of such a pursuit. Perhaps ironically, but nonetheless appropriately, this means beginning at the latter half of Socrates' and Phaedrus' discussion. Their critique of rhetoric, which occupies the final section of the dialogue, provides the negative image, so to speak, of the philosophical art and the kind of knowledge that the philosopher desires. Rhetoric raises two cautions for the philosopher. First, the art of rhetoric fails to account for the actual nature of the soul, for the art's fundamental flaw is that it honors the probable rather than the true. As a result rhetoric falls short of appropriately directing the soul toward that which the soul is most naturally attracted to and nourished by, again, Truth. In addition, rhetoric's malignant appendage, the written word, is warned against for its appearing as clear and certain knowledge. Because words committed to writing belong to another who is not at the writing's side, passively listening to or reading them does not amount to actually apprehending whatever it is they attempt to account for. As a result, rhetoric is representative of the claim that one can be told what is best to do by another, rather than seeing the inherent value of interrogating and apprehending such ideas by

oneself according to one's own soul. Since the art of rhetoric inherently relies on external, empirical objects as its guide, in effect, then, the essential difference between the rhetorical way of life and the philosophical way of life is rhetoric's incapacity to inspire one to look inward and think theoretically about what is best for their own soul, that is, it neglects to inspire one to philosophize for themselves. As I maintain in this thesis, the *Phaedrus* proposes that divine erotic madness is essential, for being in love moves us.

After the boundaries of rhetoric have been marked, Socrates' and Phaedrus' initial exploration into the nature of eros and divine erotic madness can be properly considered, the net result of which fulfills the negative impression of philosophy made by rhetoric. The palinode in Socrates' second speech describes the soul's nature and portrays its life before its fall to earth. We're told the soul is most nourished and most delighted to receive the Divine Beings in heaven, since they are the objects to which the soul is naturally attracted. However, when misfortune falls upon a nongodly soul and it fails to nourish itself appropriately, the wings keeping it among the divine cripple and fall away. This trauma sends the soul plummeting to earth where it settles and takes an earthly body. Socrates then amends his account of eros' nature and details what is actually occurring when one is moved by the eros. Since he is a god, possession by eros is brought into a new light as being a good, divine kind of madness. And when the philosopher catches sight of a beautiful face, we learn that eros propels the philosopher to recollect their memory of true Beauty, their soul's nature and primordial life and to pursue the embodied likeness of the soul's true desire. The feelings of pain and pleasure experienced under the influence of eros are accounted for as being the soul's duress for being separated from its one true love and the pleasure for being close to a divine object. Upon accounting for this experience themselves, the philosopher understands not only that practicing philosophy will allow their soul

to regrow its wings and reunite with its one true love, but also that consummating a relationship with the one they desire will secure for themselves the appropriate partner to fully live a philosophical life.

1.1 The Play

The *Phaedrus* itself manifests the subject of self-knowledge in much the same ways the philosopher must discover and apprehend self-knowledge. The playful conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus about rhetoric and love, which “is rich in reference to its own setting,” serves the purpose of enacting the metaphoric significance of the dialogue (Ferrari, 1). However, in addition to Socrates’ and Phaedrus’ own direct references to the situational background in which they find themselves, I add that their behavior towards each other, how each one acts and reacts to the other, indicates how exactly the subject of self-knowledge and the philosophical life resides in the background of the *Phaedrus* itself. For the sake of dramatic effect and brevity now, I admittedly risk conjecture and portraying caricatures of Socrates and Phaedrus. However, who the two men are and how they like will become more nuanced naturally in our time spent in the *Phaedrus*. Allow me to set the stage.

Phaedrus is greeted warmly some summery afternoon by Socrates’ asking “Phaedrus, my friend! Where have you been? And where are you going?” (Plato, 227a1). After admitting to “[h]aving spent his morning in admiration of a master [Lysias] of the rhetorical art,” Phaedrus relates to Socrates, “I am going for a walk outside the city walls...You see, I'm keeping in mind the advice of our mutual friend Acumenus, who says it's more refreshing to walk along country roads than city streets” (Ferrari, 5, 227a5-b2). In this moment we glimpse Phaedrus’ personality for being, as Ferrari describes, a practitioner of “intellectual impresario”; he consorts with the

city's "leading thinkers, spurs them to perform, and propagates the latest arguments and trends" (Ferrari, 5). By this first impression we can speculate that Phaedrus is eager and ambitious to secure his own place among the city's most important figures and willing to do what he is told is good to do. This is a mark, then, of the art of rhetoric practitioner's reliance on the opinions of other. Soon after this opening exchange we're given an inkling of Socrates' own personality. Socrates is quick to voice his curiosity about the "feast of eloquence" that occupied Lysias and Phaedrus all morning, which prompts Phaedrus to invite Socrates to come along and hear about it (227b8-9). As they embark on their walk, we're left with the impression that Socrates maintains an air of openness and receptiveness toward whome and what he is curious about. Phaedrus directs Socrates, when Socrates cannot deny the offer to join Phaedrus on his walk, to "Lead the way, then" but Socrates simply replies, "If only you will tell me" (227b9-c1). Colloquially put, Socrates is not afraid to go with the flow. Though this gesture is small, it will be important to keep in mind for what's to come.

Both characters are further sketched out before us as the scene of their walk unfolds onto the countryside. Socrates' personality is contrasted against Phaedrus' personality when Phaedrus says to him:

In fact, Socrates, you're just the right person to hear the speech that occupied [Lysias and I], since, in a roundabout way, it is about love. It is aimed at seducing a beautiful boy, but the speaker is not in love with him—this is actually what is so clever and elegant about it: Lysias argues that it is better to give your favors to someone who does not love you than to someone who does. (227c2-c7).

I believe here that Phaedrus is more or less insinuating that Socrates, the “notoriously erotic” city dweller, ought to adopt what Lysias’ speech instructs (Ferrari, 4). This shows us that, more than showing off to Socrates that he is able to, on appearances, discern fit and suitability, Phaedrus appears to think he possess insight that specifically Socrates needs, that is, insight to disillusion Socrates’ reputable erotic proclivities. This again reveals Phaedrus holding in high honor the opinions of others. However, it should not go unnoticed that Phaedrus indicates here a softer, caring side of himself specifically for Socrates. While showing his open-mindedness to Phaedrus once again, we grasp yet another nuance of Socrates. He urges, “I am so eager to hear [the speech] that I would follow you even if you were walking all the way to Megara, as Herodicus recommends, to touch the wall and come back again” (227d4 my emphasis). A footnote provides that Herodicus “was a medical expert whose regimen Socrates criticizes in Republic” (Nehamas and Woodruff, 508). Whether or not Phaedrus is aware that Socrates is critical of Herodicus’ instructions we cannot say (nor are we justified in knowing whether or not Socrates still remains critical of Herodicus in the Phaedrus).

It seems as if by slipping another’s “expert” opinion Socrates is bringing to Phaedrus’ attention that he too knows of regimens physicians recommend just like Phaedrus. And, more importantly, Socrates evidently does not follow all instructions that even experts may recommend. This is assuming of course that Socrates does not, in fact, ever walk all the way to Megara without Phaedrus’ enticing him to (hypothetically) do so. In effect, then, Socrates appears in his own way to be subtly suggesting to Phaedrus not to believe everything he is told. Or, at the very least Socrates indirectly prompts Phaedrus to consider for himself the value of “the latest arguments and trends” to which he ascribes, since it is apparently the case that there are different, perhaps competing, trends out there (Ferrari, 5). Whether or not Phaedrus grasps

this moment, we can only wonder for now. In this light, it would seem they mutually care about the wellbeing of the other, however, the forms their concerns take on is revealing, once again, what the two men value. Socrates appears to be concerned with Phaedrus' inner inadequacy to discern for himself what is best for him, while Phaedrus' concern follows suit with the public opinions of Socrates' outward behavior.

And then we see another side of Phaedrus that mitigates some of his perhaps, initial uppityness. For when Socrates asks him to recite Lysias' speech Phaedrus replies, "Do you think that a mere dilettante like me could recite from memory in a manner worthy of him a speech that Lysias, the best of our writers, took such time and trouble to compose?" (228a1). Socrates sees right through this ruse as being Phaedrus' own rhetorical, roundabout way of using Socrates "to practice [his] own speechmaking on [him]," and insists that Phaedrus recites Lysias' speech word for word, since Phaedrus is concealing the speech underneath his cloak (228e1). Phaedrus immediately concedes (228e3). Setting aside the fact that Phaedrus now explicitly reveals his want to be a rhetorician, we perceive him here to express an interest in perfecting his practice. Thus, Phaedrus appears not only willing to learn but, at least when dealing with Socrates, impressionable as well, for Socrates so easily got him to comply.

As soon as the couple begin their walk along the river Phaedrus returns to showing off his ability "to discern what is fitting or appropriate to each situation" (Ferrari, 5). For instance, "How 'appropriate' (eis kairon), [Phaedrus] declares, that he came out barefoot for his stroll...and how apt a plan this is for the time of year and day" (Ferrari, 4). Following an attempt to further flaunt his craft of intellectual impresario by (mis)identifying the alleged site where a legend is said to have taken place, Phaedrus presses Socrates, "But tell me, Socrates, in the name

of Zeus, do you really believe that that legend is true?” (229b4-c5). Aside from another glimpse we have here of Phaedrus’ particular willingness to learn something, we’ll see that Socrates’ response weaves the question of self-knowledge as the fundamental thread of the philosophical life fabric. He begins, “Actually, it would not be out of place for me to reject it, as our intellectuals do,” but goes on to generalize that explanations refuting such legends “are amusing enough, but they are a job for a man I cannot envy at all” (229c6-d3). Socrates has no time to waste fabricating rational accounts for mythical creatures based on empirical plausibility “by means of some sort of rough ingenuity” (229e4). The reason for this being, he tells us:

I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that...I accept what is generally believed, and, as I was just saying, I look not into them but into my own self: Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon or am I a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature? (230a3)

The nuance of Socrates’ complication here is striking. I say the task to know thyself marks the groundwork for the philosophical life because Socrates implies that such an existential order cannot be fulfilled by means of “some sort of rough ingenuity” based on outward, empirical plausibility. A true account for what Socrates is, then, appears to demand a practice of inward, theoretical sorts, namely, what will eventually be demonstrated as philosophy. The opening scene of the dialogue thus frames the subject of self-knowledge in the Phaedrus between the difference of an art based on empirical plausibility and an art based on theoretical truth, the latter of which being alluded to as the form of art that makes possible the conceivability of self-knowledge and the good, philosophical life. It is important now to consider how the subject of

self-knowledge is introduced. Since it is being introduced through the enacted conversation of Socrates and Phaedrus, we can take our first impressions of the two men and the things they say as representative of the two different arts that will soon come under their own scrutiny.

We see this by looking more closely at the two different forms of concerns one has for the other. Phaedrus' concern for Socrates' notoriously erotic reputation is a concern focused on Socrates' outward being, that is, it's based on the empirical evidence of what everyone else in the city thinks about Socrates' behavior. On the other hand, Socrates' concern for Phaedrus' inability to recognize fit and suitability on his own is a concern focused on Phaedrus' very own craft of intellectual impresario, which Socrates rejects on the grounds that in its conception this craft cannot account for what is actually best for oneself. The Delphic inscription, then, is at the root of Socrates' preference for an art of inward focus. Referring to Phaedrus' incessant showing off who and what he knows and attempt to motivate Socrates to confirm or deny the myth, Ferrari succinctly says, "Phaedrus...has a tendency to consider intellectual talk good just because it is intellectual talk, rather than because it is good talk" (Ferrari, 7). And it seems that Socrates uses Phaedrus' inadequacy at recognizing this fact about himself and his impressionability as a sort of "spring-board for exploration of how the talk of the true philosopher is indeed appropriate just to the extent that it is good" (Ferrari, 9). To show Phaedrus this fact, Socrates puts the art of rhetoric that Phaedrus is such an admirer of on trial.

1.2 The Critique of Rhetoric

The critique of rhetoric actually begins immediately after Phaedrus has concluded reciting Lysias speech. The speech instructs that a boy should give his favors to a nonlover because, I'm paraphrasing for now, someone who is not out of their mind possessed by eros (the

lover) will know and do what is best for the boy (230e8-234c7). Though Socrates is “in ecstasy” all by Phaedrus’ doing and pays Phaedrus the compliment that it seemed “the speech had made [him] radiant with delight,” Phaedrus becomes disgruntled over the fact that Socrates appears not to be taking seriously the goodness of the speech itself (234d1-8). “You are not at all serious, Socrates. But now tell me the truth, in the name of Zeus, god of friendship: Do you think that any other Greek could say anything more impressive or more complete on this same subject?” asks Phaedrus (234e1-3). Socrates then confesses, “What? Must we praise the speech even on the ground that its author has said what the situation demanded, and not instead simply on the ground that he has spoken in a clear and concise manner, with a precise turn of phrase?” (234e4-7). For Socrates it is not enough to judge the goodness of a speech merely on its “clear and concise” style of speaking. He implies that the goodness of a speech in part also relies on whether or not everything that was actually needed to be said to persuade a person has been said, for that is the aim of this art of speaking. I assume Socrates thinks Lysias’ speech failed in this respect since, we shall see, Socrates remained unconvinced. Since Socrates’ criticism of Lysias’ speech hones in on Lysias’ failure to say everything that needed to be said, we have a preliminary outline for Socrates’ criterion for the goodness of an art of speaking: the manner of speaking and what is being instructed, the content, must both be artful. An idea for how to speak artfully and what is artful to talk about will be forwarded in what’s to come.

Socrates supposes to Phaedrus, “do you think that anyone could argue that one should favor the nonlover rather than the lover without praising the former for keeping his wits about him or condemning the latter for losing his...and still have something left to say?” (235e5-236a3). Phaedrus then challenges Socrates to try to say more on Lysias’ subject’, which Socrates accepts only after a short game of playing hard to get (236e7). Socrates argues Lysias’ claim but

from a different direction. He instructs that a boy should give his favors to a nonlover because, I'm paraphrasing again, someone who is out of their mind possessed by eros, the lover, will only bring harm on the boy's health and development (237b2-241d2). However, not long after Socrates gives his first speech he is compelled to reconsider his denouncement of eros. (What compelled him to do so will be addressed later.) The central issue Socrates takes with the instructions of Lysias' and his first speech is their premise that the erotic madness of a lover is "a form of degrading madness, [which] characterizes the passions as mere urges for bodily replenishment, with no role to play in our understanding of the good" (Nussbaum, 201).

At once we see a tension between the nonlover being in their right mind and the lover being out of their mind. Lysias alleges that only one who is in their right mind can possess knowledge of what is good. Socrates wants to investigate and undermine this claim because he has reason to believe that not all madness is bad, pure and simple. Plainly, we're given the impression that Socrates would argue that a boy should give his favors to a lover when one is available. He cites those "finest experts of all" as the god-inspired prophets who are out of their minds performing their fine work delivering prophecies of the future as a gift of the god (244c1). Socrates compares the godly origins of prophecy against the "clear-headed study of the future," which is less perfect and less admirable than prophetic prediction because of the origins of its reasoning and learning being of human self control (244c5). If one will allow me to consider prophecy as a form of knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the future, we see here that knowledge inspired by divine origins is better than knowledge of human origins by its nature of being heaven-sent. This foreshadows Socrates' central task in the *Phaedrus*. He aims to show the nature of erotic madness as being a divine kind of madness. The merit of such a madness, like the god

inspired prophets, will prove to inspire heaven-sent knowledge in the lover, which will render Lysias' claim that the lover does not know what is best insubstantial.

Here is where we fast-forward, if you will, to the second half of the dialogue that picks up where the discussion over rhetoric left off before Socrates and Phaedrus become distracted by the subject of eros. The critique of rhetoric provides the insight needed to mark the edges of an appropriate art of speaking. Where the limits of the art of rhetoric fall short of appropriating investigating and directing the soul, philosophy's likeness will be discern. A likeness of philosophical practice and knowledge takes the form of the corrective measures to rhetoric that Socrates and Phaedrus discuss. The critique of rhetoric divides rhetoric by speech giving and the written word. We can take speech giving to mean that particular art of speaking which has the intended effect of persuading, or directing, a crowd to do something, like, for example one should not give their favors to the nonlover. The practice of speech giving will be critiqued for its failure as a practice to honor the truth, thus rendering the value of what specifically a speech may order valueless. The written word operates in similar fashion as a speech, that is, it is a physical piece of writing which has the intended effect of persuading, or directing, its reader into some course of action, with the additional caveat that a piece of writing's author is not physically present at time of reading. Socrates cautions against the seeming appeal that the written word possesses; though writing may give the impression that it offers a reader clear and certain knowledge to apprehend, this is not the case. Compounding this fact is the negative effects which are occasioned by the written word's author not being present to provide their account. We will find that at the core of the critique of rhetoric is the rhetorician's inability to conceive of what is best for the soul, since the rhetorician is looking in all the wrong places for such an account.

1.3 The Pharmakon

Jacques Derrida exposes the ambiguous nature of rhetoric, as it is critiqued in the *Phaedrus*, by paying close attention to the original Greek. His point of departure is the Greek word *pharmakon*, which is used in the dialogue to describe writing as a drug (Derrida 70). The portrayal of the written word as a kind of drug places it appropriately in the ambiguous conceptual space of being either a medicine and/or a poison. Derrida draws our attention to the concept of the *pharmakon* at its early introduction in the dialogue. Having been persuaded by *Phaedrus* to step outside the city walls to listen to him recite *Lysias*' speech, *Socrates* admits, "I'm a lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas men in the town do. Yet you [*Phaedrus*] seem to have discovered a drug for getting me out" (Derrida, 71, my emphasis)¹. The "drug" at hand here being the speech *Phaedrus* will soon recite. What is more, however, Derrida clarifies that "[t]his charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination" that works its magic to draw *Socrates* away from his beloved sanctuary for learning is specifically the physical object of the text (Derrida, 70). In other words, we'll see shortly that what is so fascinating to *Socrates* is not simply listening to *Phaedrus* recite the speech, but rather the actual leaves of paper bound in a book.

Socrates goes on to elaborate just how powerful a drug these leaves of paper are for him by saying, "A hungry animal can be driven by dangling a carrot or a bit of greenstuff in front of it; similarly if you proffer me speeches bound in books (*en bibliois*) I don't doubt you can cart me all round *Attica*" (Derrida, 71). Derrida's rationale for this fine nuance of *Socrates*' fascination taps into his love for learning, for it is "[o]nly the *logoi en biblios*, only words that...

¹ *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns), Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961). Translated by R. Hackforth

force one to wait for them in the form and under cover of a solid object, letting themselves be desired for the space of a walk, only hidden letters can thus get Socrates moving” (Derrida, 71). I speculate that what is so enticing to Socrates is the mystery of these hidden letters, for they dangle in front of his face the opportunity to do what he loves, learn. Would the presentation of a mystery not imply the opportunity to explore something and learn what may lie hidden? Now that Socrates has confessed to being a lover of something, we can demonstrate by example how being a lover could be more poison than medicine.

The lover in Lysias’ speech and Socrates speech was admonished and deemed harmful on the basis that he was out of his mind due to his being possessed by eros. Derrida articulates the particular danger that being out of one’s mind poses for someone like Socrates who is interested in possessing themselves, for it is the danger of “the way in which men are carried out of themselves by pleasure, become absent from themselves, forget themselves and die in the thrill of song” (Derrida, 68). That being outside of and absent from oneself is framed as dangerous here, rationalized self-control the likes of Lysias is thus valued on the grounds that in this state one is able to know and do what is best for themselves. To add, Derrida seems to be referencing in the line immediately above one of the dialogues self referential moments that Ferrari speaks of. During an interlude between conversational subjects, Socrates is given recourse by the chorus of cicadas to recount to Phaedrus the insects’ mythical genesis. He tells Phaedrus that cicadas were born into their insect lives after living as humans who “were so overwhelmed with the pleasure of singing” upon the birth of the Muses “that they forgot to eat or drink; so they died without even realizing it” (259c). That cicadas were once humans who failed to remain in possession of themselves and instead become swept away by the pleasure of singing, the myth overtly connotes the existential severity of being able to attend to oneself.

The myth goes on: “It is from them that the race of the cicadas came into being; and, as a gift from the Muses, they have no need of nourishment once they are born. Instead, they immediately burst into song, without food or drink, until it is time for them to die” (259c2-5). The existential threat of unrestrained desire facing self-knowledge is succinctly underscored by Anne Carson’s saying, “Cicadas have no life apart from their desire and when it ends, so do they” (Carson, 139). The mad lover, then, is cast in more light to reveal that the specific cause for their alleged not being able to attend to themselves is for the threat of being swept away by unrestrained pleasure. It will prove useful later to note the role forgetting plays in self-possession. As it stands now it appears that the cicadas’ error of forgetting what is appropriate for them, i.e., the nourishment of food and drink, at the very least contributed to their having been transformed into cicadas. Though we have only considered the written word in particular, since writing in the *Phaedrus* is subsumed by the whole of the critique of rhetoric, we can expand the above analysis to include the whole of the art of rhetoric. This is to say speeches that are orated, too, pose the threat of seduction. Having connected the art of rhetoric to the alleged menace of the lover, without deeper analysis it seems thus far that, most generally speaking, the danger of rhetoric is the outside threat it leaves one susceptible to. The question I pose now, then, is in what way does rhetoric operate outwardly, and in what ways may this impede self-knowledge apprehension.

Writing as *pharmakon* is again the most efficient place to begin discerning rhetoric’s general outwardness. We see this concept best played out in the short myth Socrates tells about the King of Egypt, Thamus, and the demigod named Theuth. Theuth presents the King of Egypt with his invention of “a discipline (*mathēma*) that will make the Egyptians wiser (*sophōterous*) and will improve their memories (*mnēmonikōterous*): both memory (*mnēmē*) and instruction

(*sophia*) have found their remedy (*pharmakon*)” (Derrida, 95). The invention Theuth speaks of is none other than writing. However, before we take a look at the King of Egypt’s criticism of Theuth’s invention, we can begin to incorporate under our present scrutiny that particular art of speaking which is utilized by the rhetorician. Derrida dissects Theuth’s crafty use of the word *pharmakon* to describe his invention to the king:

The common translation of *pharmakon* by remedy—a beneficent drug—is not, of course, inaccurate. Not only does *pharmakon* really mean remedy and thus erase, on a certain surface of its functioning, the ambiguity of its meaning. But it is even quite obvious here, the stated intention of Theuth being precisely to stress the worth of his product, that he turns the word on its strange and invisible pivot, presenting it from a single one, the most reassuring, of its poles. (Derrida, 97)

Playing the role of the rhetorician, Theuth is using the word *pharmakon* has a rhetorical device in order to persuade the King of Egypt that this *pharmakon* is more medicine than poison for the people of Egypt. By the way he means remedy here as a beneficent medicine, we can assume Theuth has no intention of revealing to Thamus the other “pole” of his invention’s nature. Hypothetically speaking, in the event that the King of Egypt were, in fact, persuaded by Theuth and disseminated amongst the people of Egypt something that is also poisonous, the obvious danger of this art of speaking is its artful concealment, or at least for now, partial concealment of what is actually best for people, assuming of course that it is more preferable than not to disseminate only beneficent “drugs” amongst a body of people. Rhetoric, then, is cast in its appropriate, partial light as being a practice not concerned with revealing the whole truth of a subject (the subject here being Theuth’s invention), but rather a practice whose aim is to lead a

person toward whatever it is that the speaker wants them to be lead to. This manipulation of the truth must be an inherent characteristic of rhetorical persuasion since, simply put, it's far easier for Theuth to persuade the King of Egypt to adopt his invention, which is what he wants, by only remarking on its "medicinal" characteristics and leaving aside its "poisonous" ones.

If you will allow me a brief digression to the opening of the dialogue, I will put into perspective the particular artfulness of the opening of Lysias' speech to Phaedrus, which will illustrate an example of a speaker leading his audience in the precise direction he wants them to go. In a speech, whose addressee is Phaedrus, arguing for a boy to give his favors to a nonlover, Lysias begins, "You understand my situation: I've told you how good it would be for us, in my opinion, if this worked out. In any case, I don't think I should lose the chance to get what I am asking for, merely because I don't happen to be in love with you" (230e8). Quite plainly here Lysias, the self proclaimed nonlover, is nonetheless attempting to artfully seduce Phaedrus into "how good it would be" if he were to give his favors to a nonlover, that is, Lysias, rather than a lover. This reveals, then, at the forefront of Socrates' admonishment of Lysias' advice for Phaedrus is for the reason that Lysias doesn't even appear to have Phaedrus' best interest in mind, but instead his own. In the background of Lysias' and Theuth's art of speaking is the prefiguration, if not the complete formation, of this conviction that one could be told what is best for them by someone else, that is, by an outside source. And the makeup of this conviction evidently leaves aside the inner truth of what may actually be best for a person in favor of what the rhetorician, who is outside of their addressee, deems persuasive to say for their own purposes. Lastly, given the personal and sexual implications behind Lysias' speech, we can discern that personal desire plays a role guiding the rhetorician. On the one hand, we have Lysias conveying sexual, erotic desire, specifically his personal satisfaction of that desire, under

the guise of his smearing “the irrational state of the person in love” and praising “rational self-possession, or *sōphrosunē*,” that is, himself (Nussbaum, 204-205). On the other hand, we can speculate, Theuth channels a personal desire for whatever gain or glory manifests from the King’s avowal of the goodness of his invention by masking the less attractive properties of the *pharmakon*.

Returning to the King’s response to Theuth, Thamus tells him that writing will elicit forgetfulness in the souls of those who learn it, “they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own” (275a4). At once we see here that Thamus’ critique of writing invokes the external, outward nature of rhetoric that we’ve been contemplating. The king continues, “You have not discovered a [*pharmakon*] for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality” (275a6). We will learn later, in our examination of the lover, that not all reminders are as diabolical for knowledge apprehension as writing is being portrayed here. However, keeping this later discussion in mind it’s still possible now to separate writing as a bad kind of reminder for the implication it bears on knowledge apprehension. Relying on reminders, in a sense, puts one’s knowledge outside of oneself, which is to say that one does not actually have it in mind. Also, since he portrays the written word as mere signs that belong to others which only appear as wisdom but not its reality, there’s the implication that actually apprehending real wisdom, actual knowledge, must depend on one’s own possessing it for themselves.

This idea calls to mind valuable insight provided by Charles Griswold. “[T]he standard Socratic claim that one knows something when one can give a satisfactory [account] of it,” as he tells us, parallels the proposal that actually apprehending knowledge depends on one being able to articulate that knowledge for oneself (Griswold, 115). If it is on paper and not in mind, then there is nothing to articulate for oneself. Furthermore, if we take into account the critique of artful speaking, specifically its inherent conviction that someone can be told what is “true” and that conviction’s potentially “poisonous” effects, we can sketch out that, not only must actual knowledge be apprehended for oneself, but also that apprehending knowledge for oneself and by oneself staves off, at the very least, the outside threat of being deceived into accepting something “poisonous.” I ask, then, how does one stave off the threat of deceiving themselves? This question gets to the core of how the art of rhetoric differs in operation from the art of philosophy in operation, for I am essentially asking how does one apprehend, or account for, what is good for oneself. To move forward in contemplation of this question, I would like to remind you of my forward thinking to reserve a space for good kinds of reminders.

1.4 Operation

While Socrates and Phaedrus try to resolve how one could truly account for a subject, we glimpse Socrates demonstrate an appropriate usage of a reminder by way of a subtle, punning word association. Keep in mind that this actually occurs after the discussion of eros. When Socrates thinks back to his and Phaedrus’ effort to account for the true nature of erotic madness, Phaedrus judges that they discussed eros “[m]ost manfully,” to which Socrates replies, “I thought you were going to say “madly,” which would have been the truth, and is also just what I was

looking for: We did say, didn't we, that love is a kind of madness?" (265a4-5)². Socrates' response shows how he was "looking" for a way to advance the conversation further along, but evidently needed to be reminded of "madly" at the phonetically close "manfully". Carson has a quick word to say on the logic of puns that does well to contextualize the fleetingness of this exchange between the two men. She says, "Within a pun you see the possibility of grasping a better truth, a truer meaning, than is available from the separate senses of either [manfully or madly]" (Carson, 35).

Assuming that being directed toward what is true is the most appropriate way to see clearly what may or may not be good for oneself (recall Theuth directing Thamus toward the medicinal and/or poisonous *pharmakon*), I say this moment is an appropriate usage of a reminder because Socrates uses the punning reminder as a launching point to advance the conversation toward a "better truth, a truer meaning" since, as we will see now, that is in fact where the conversation, and this paper, is naturally headed. Lastly, for our future purposes we can propose now that the nature of an inappropriate usage of a reminder occurs when one fails to abstract from the potential stimulus that is a reminder. It is abstraction that Socrates demonstrates here, for without his abstracting from the terms of his and Phaedrus' present subject he couldn't have seen how his remembering madness could be applicable for the subject of rhetoric. In short, it seems that it does not do well to dwell on memory and remain inactive in thought.

Regrettably, continuing to follow the trajectory of the critique of rhetoric in the second half of the Phaedrus means spoiling, partially, what we will gather from the first half in due course. Speaking of remembering, let us remember the current question under consideration. How does

² Reading the Greek here *andrikōs* and *manikōs*

one apprehend, or account for, the truth of a subject? In remembering their prior conversation about madness, Socrates remembers the most appropriate solution to this question. He reviews the path his and Phaedrus' conversation took to painstakingly divide "two kinds of madness, one produced by human illness, the other by a divinely inspired release from normally accepted behavior" and then again divide "four parts within the divine kind and connected them to four gods...the fourth part of madness to....[Eros]" (265a9-b5). This excursion into the dialogue's past is for the reason that the memory demonstrated Socrates' and Phaedrus' process of unfolding the truth. About Lysias' speech Socrates says, "That would have been fine to say if madness were bad, pure and simple; but in fact the best things we have come from madness, when it is given as a gift of the god" (244a7). I believe it wrong to say that Lysias, the master rhetorician, failed to properly explore his own subject, erotic madness, in such a way that revealed its true nature because that is not the most immediate danger Lysias poses. In fact, this is too harsh of a charge to put on Lysias for we know that rhetoricians are not even interested in revealing the actual truth of their subjects. What he is rightfully guilty of is producing a speech which directs Phaedrus away from what is actually best for him, that is, the truth. More than the above providing us a slight peek of the fact that Phaedrus and Socrates did make such an exploration together into the true nature of eros, we are provided with a slight peek of how one could properly explore the truth of a subject.

After properly dividing the different kinds of madness, the two men collected their thoughts, so to speak, to make "a not altogether implausible speech" that accounted for the true nature of divine erotic madness (265b9). On their not altogether implausible speech, Socrates says, "Well, everything else in it really does appear to me to have been spoken in play....and there were in it two kinds of things the nature of which it would be quite wonderful to grasp by means of a

systematic art” (265c8-d2). I’ll examine this line in two parts. First, that Socrates attributes most of his second speech to having been composed “in play,” it removes the making of the speech from the context of speechmaking proper. Socrates’ second speech naturally played right into the conversation he and Phaedrus were entertaining, rather than, we can imagine, Socrates sitting down at a desk to compose an ironclad, persuasive speech like some rhetorician. Second, we know that his not implausible account for the actual nature of erotic madness was made possible by some general operation of division and collection. Well insofar as we see here Socrates dividing his own account to consist of “two kinds of things” and resolves that the single nature of these two kinds of things would be “quite wonderful to grasp by means of a systematic art,” Socrates is clearly investigating his own general operation of division and collection in order to systematize it into a more formal art, since by his own account of erotic madness its operation engenders not implausible accounts and Socrates.

Socrates goes on to say, “The first consists in seeing together things that are scattered about everywhere and collecting them into one kind, so that by defining each thing we can make clear the subject of any instruction we wish to give” (265d5). This first part of the systematic art manifests in the dialogue with Socrates’ reasoning that Lysias’ speech is untrue. Among all the elements of Lysias speech, Socrates makes clear that the subject, eros, “is a god or something divine” and so “can’t be bad in any way”, which is the exact reason Socrates feels compelled to recant his first speech that dishonored the god (242e1). In light of this information, the critique of the rhetorician’s way of life is brought into finer focus as being “their utter foolishness in parading their dangerous falsehoods and preening themselves over perhaps deceiving a few silly people and coming to be admired by them” all for the price of speaking impiously about something as divine as eros (242e2-243a3). Here, too, is an instance of rhetoric’s outwardness

which takes the form of the rhetorician's outwardly directed desire to deceive and be admired by others outside of themselves. Therefore, we can speculate that prefatory to accounting for the truth of a subject for and by oneself, neither of which the rhetorician does, is a desire directed inward. Perhaps it is fair to say at this point that the rhetorician fails to desire above all else, i.e., above deceiving silly people and being admired, seeing the truth in things.

After collecting a clear and certain form of a subject, the second part of Socrates' systematic art is in a way the reverse of the first part. Rather than collecting the scattered sameness of many parts, the second part then divides "a single thing that is also by nature capable of encompassing many" in order to discern the whole of that single subject's nature (266b8). This second part of the systematic art manifested as Socrates and Phaedrus divided the single subject of eros to encompass a sort of eros worthy of reproach as well as a sort of eros "that shares its name with the other but is actually divine"(266a1-b1). Finally, Socrates professes that those who employ this systematic art of investigation he has "always called them "dialecticians"" (266c1). Now considering that Socrates and Phaedrus enactment of this systematic art occurred through play, that is, the natural ebb and flow of their conversation, I postulate this dialectical manner of speaking as being Socrates' corrective for the manner of speaking that conceals truth and is practiced by rhetoricians. Unique to this kind of art of speaking is that it "uses the power of questioning to accomplish" accounting for the true nature of a subject, since that is the direction toward which Socrates and Phaedrus orient (Griswold, 116). It is the receptivity of this dialectical art of speaking to questioning that provides its natural ebb and flow like quality which erodes the shore until truth can be dug up. Indeed, is it not with a question does this entire dialogue open, which is to say that the basis for the conversation's being had, or the basis for keeping Socrates and Phaedrus together, is in the name of apprehending truth?

In comparing the actual fruits of a dialectical art of speaking against the art of speaking practiced by rhetoricians, Socrates urges, “Could there be anything valuable which is independent of the methods I mentioned and is still grasped by art?” (266d1). Here Socrates explicitly calls into question the very value of the actual directions that Lysias and rhetoricians alike try to convince their audiences to adopt. Socrates implicates that since rhetoricians speak in a manner that does not reveal the actual truth of the things they are talking about, then precisely what it is that they are saying is valueless. For instance, the direction for impressionable men to give their favors to nonlovers is, according to Socrates’ insinuation, valueless. There is also the implication that the actual manner in which rhetoricians speak is artless. Or, perhaps more precisely what a rhetorician may have to say could be valuable for something, say, seducing impressionable men into thinking that giving their favors to you is best, however, actually doing so is artless and therefore valueless because it does not accord with what is actually best.

We can now configure that the actual way in which a rhetorician lives is being charged for being artless and valueless in form and content. What I am calling here the form and content of the rhetorician’s life I mean: the form of life they desire to live, that is a life characteristic of being a rhetorician, and the content of that life meaning their actual enacting that life, their living it. This point is well summed up in Socrates’ saying that “whatever one must go through on the way to an honorable goal is itself honorable” (274b1-2). Whatever the rhetorician must go through on the way to a valueless goal is itself valueless. However, is it fair to account for the actual desire of the rhetorician to be one that is only outwardly aimed towards the goal of deceiving a few silly people and being admired by them? Or more severely, is the life of a rhetorician really not worth living?

It appears that the worthlessness of the rhetorician's life does not have to do with their not knowing what is truly best to do in life. I speculate this to be the case because wouldn't Socrates' not knowing what he is himself suggest that he also does not know what manner of living is truly most appropriate for his actual nature. I have no intention to argue that ignorance is itself an offence. That one remains ignorant, then, I say, is deserving of reproach. We can imagine the kind of harm inactive ignorance, so to speak, can wreak by recalling the *pharmakon*. Suppose one remained woefully ignorant to the poisonous properties of the *pharmakon*, and, anachronistically speaking perhaps, one accepted the doctor's administration of such a drug. How much poison can a person stomach? This is all to say that the worthlessness of the rhetorician's life manifests from their doing nothing to explore and figure out what is actually best to do. For by definition of the rhetorician's job description, if you will, is patently not caring for what is true, but rather "[t]hey only care about what is convincing," Socrates says, and "[t]his is called "the likely" (272e1). Still though, I worry that I remain too harsh on the rhetorician, or, much worse, that I remain ignorant to the actual possibility of their possessing knowledge of anything true.

What if, say, the rhetorician actually knew and actually did what is truly best for themselves in the inner confines of their home and only paraded around outside in the city squares deceiving silly people. Could this be the case? Socrates never makes such a definitive case, though he does imply that even if a rhetorician were capable of conceiving any artful course of action (for themselves or others), simply knowing such insight would wash away their desire to do anything else. To clarify, I say for now that the rhetorician is not even capable of conceiving any valuable, artful course of action not simply because the rhetorician does not know what is actually valuable to do but also the rhetorician is fundamentally uninterested in what is actually the case.

It is for the reason of their depreciation of the truth that Socrates' argument takes off with his asking Phaedrus, "By "the likely" does [this] mean anything but what is accepted by the crowd?" (273b1). After Phaedrus answers in the affirmative, Socrates replies:

No one 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. (273e1-3)

For the sake of comprehending what Socrates is saying here, we can imagine that some single, "perfect" speech exists such that it is capable of successfully persuading each and every person in a crowd of people. The difficulty of such a task stems from the single crowd's nature being a composite of many different characters. Particular characters will correspondingly demand particular rhetorical techniques to occasion persuasion. For example, I would assume a silly person is persuaded by speeches far less comprehensive than a speech that could persuade, say, Socrates. Actually, we needn't assume such a case, for we know for a fact that silly Phaedrus was initially charmed by Lysias' speech whereas Socrates never fell for such charmwork.

But who's to say that a silly person cannot grasp, and therefore wouldn't be convinced by, a speech akin to one that could persuade someone like Socrates. Such a speech would have to demonstrate, at the very least, a likeness of the truth, for otherwise no person with a character the likes of Socrates would be convinced by it. This is so because, on Socrates' account, "people get the idea of what is likely through its similarity to the truth. And we just explained that in every case the person who knows the truth knows best how to determine similarities" (273d2-4). We can infer, then, that silly people do not know the truth, or at least not well enough, for if they did

they would be able to determine, for instance, like Socrates does, that Lysias' speech was only like the truth but not actually true. This is all to say, then, it would be testimony to a great effort in the event that a rhetorician could compose a single speech that were able to seduce each particular soul which constitutes the composite of characters that is a crowd.

Only if this could be done, as claimed by Socrates, will one truly be speaking artfully. But Socrates details that the laborious effort which goes into truly speaking artfully "a sensible man will make not 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" (273e6). It is in the light of this pronouncement we see that even if a rhetorician were capable of conceiving any artful course of action like speaking artfully, simply knowing such insight would wash away their desire to do anything else. I can speak so generally about what the rhetorician's fundamental capabilities are able to conceive for two reasons. First, even if the rhetorician were capable of composing that perfect, absolutely defensible speech, that is, speak with the greatest of artfulness, such an effort to do so, we're told, is not born out of any desire for outside appraisal. Second, recall the hypothetical I propose earlier. Could a rhetorician in private live in any artful capacity all the while in public paraded around the city squares deceiving silly people and coming to be admired by them? My latter point would suggest otherwise: this Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde like hypothetical, simply wouldn't manifest in a single person since speaking and acting in the interest of charming others is evidently in conflict with the interest to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods. I wonder, then, what is so displeasing, in the eyes of the gods, about charming others?

Getting to Know Thamus

Socrates attests that even if truly impressing upon many people's souls at once were possible, it is not desirable to do so. However, this is not to say that it is undesirable to do so because simply doing so displeases the gods. Clearly mere persuasion is not bad pure and simple, for we see in play Socrates convincingly persuading Phaedrus through his dialectical art of speaking (257c1-5). I imagine the gods would be very pleased with whomever could successfully persuade many people at once with a single speech, only if what was being ordered was anything of true value. Alas, this exactly wouldn't be possible in the case of the rhetorician because they do not value, and therefore desire getting to know, what is truly best for any one and particular soul since "it is not necessary for the intending orator to learn what is really [true], but only what will seem just to the crowd who will act as judges" (260a1-3). It seems, then, central to the rhetorician's failure to please the gods originates from their failure to properly get to know one another persons in themselves and in a crowd. This idea appears deserving of contemplation for considering what displeases the gods and what consequences derive for properly apprehending knowledge from doing or not doing so. As fate would have it, we have Thamus as a model to judge what please and displeases a god.

To remind you, the King of Egypt denouncing the "medicinal" properties of Theuth's *pharmakon*, and suggests instead that the written word is more "poisonous" for the people of Egypt. Devotees of the written word, he declares, "will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own" (275a4). There is a close affinity we can make out between remembering on one's own and actually knowing something on one's own. At stake in trusting a rhetorician's piece of writing to appropriately instruct how one should think or act is the false expectation that the writing can convey anything valuable.

And it is in this sense that Thamus says writing only appears as wisdom but is not its reality (275a6). This point, and why remembering and knowing on one's own correlate with one another, is made clear by Socrates saying:

Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accept them, thinking that writing can yield results that are clear or certain, must be quite naive and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophetic judgment: otherwise, how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about? (275c6)

At once the critical distinction between simply reading and actually knowing is brought to fore here, which is reminiscent of “the standard Socratic claim that one knows something when one can give a satisfactory *logos* of it” (Griswold, 115). One can read and learn by heart the written words of the most intelligent of thinkers, but this would not amount to actually knowing the subject of a piece of writing.

However, the deeper significance of not being able to actually apprehend the subject of a piece of writing, we are unable to appreciate without introducing the corrective that Derrida offers for the word being translated (and used thus far by myself) as “subject.” Calling whatever it actually is merely a subject, Derrida thinks, destroys “the whole organic unity of signification” for whom “subject” actually signifies (Derrida, 78). “*Logos*,” he retranslates, “—“discourse”— has the meaning here of argument, line of reasoning, guiding thread animating the spoken discussion” (Derrida, 78 my emphasis). That the *logos* of a piece of writing cannot actually be known by a reader, is for the reason that the originator of the *logos* is not there. This also

provides new context for the way in which *logos* detailed in a piece of writing belongs to someone else. It belongs to someone else in the sense that it is quite literally someone else's thoughts on a matter. Moving forward using this more nuanced and articulate meaning for the concept of *logos*, will open up theoretical space to work in. Still though, why is it displeasing to the gods to apprehend knowledge in any other way?

Derrida reads into the subtle, yet powerful significance of Thamus' depreciation of writing and the figure of Thamus himself. Writing is presented to the King of Egypt "like a kind of present offered up in homage by a vassal to his lord...but above all as a finished work submitted to his appreciation. And this work is itself an art, a capacity for work, a power of operation" (Derrida, 76). Upon closer scrutiny of the character Thamus, we learn that he doubtlessly "represents Ammon, the king of the gods, the king of kings, the god of gods" (Derrida, 76). In other words, given the symbolic precedent of his being the god of gods, king of kings, Thamus "is thus the other name for the origin of value" (Derrida, 76). In this new light it is no small consequence that the judgment for the value of Theuth's new art is put into the hands of Thamus, the origin of value itself. The second rate value, if any value at all, of writing is thus inherently contextualized within and by the figure of the god-king as follows:

God the king does not know how to write, but that ignorance or incapacity only testifies to his sovereign independence. He has no need to write. He speaks, he says, he dictates, and his word suffices. Whether a scribe from his secretarial staff then adds the supplement of a transcription or not, that consignment is always in essence secondary. (Derrida, 76)

In sum, the written word of Thamus cannot alone have any value in and of itself because Thamus is himself the origin of its value, and as such his account of any subject, i.e., his *logos*, is matchless. There is even linguistic evidence suggesting that within the very concept of reading “[t]he people who designed our language in the old days,” Socrates uses as proof for a different however not unrelated claim, were mindful of writing’s secondary status (244b8). In Greek the verb to read, *anagignōslein*, is “a compound of the verb ‘to know’...and the prefix...meaning ‘again.’ If you are reading, you are not at the beginning” (Carson, 152). If Thamus were to read his transcribed words he would only be “again-knowing” that which he has already said. More pressing, however, I mention this to say that if you (or he) were reading his transcribed words, you (or he) would not be at the source of their actual value, which is to suggest again the importance of physically being engaged and at the side of another (and their subject).

Derrida continues, “[W]ithout rejecting the homage, the god-king will depreciate [writing], pointing out not only its uselessness but its menace and its mischief....In doing so, god-the-king-that-speaks is acting like a father” (Derrida, 76). In evoking this paternalistic sense of Thamus’ watchful eye on writing, Derrida reconstructs “a Platonic schema that assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely *logos*, to the paternal position” (Derrida, 76). It is critical to keep in mind the symbolic nature of the metaphor being enacted through Thamus to prevent mistaking what is occurring here as simply phallogocentrism. “[T]he origin of *logos* is its father. One could say anachronously that the “speaking subject” is the father of his speech...Without his father, he would be nothing but, in fact, writing” (Derrida, 77). It is for this reason (and no small coincidence) Socrates insists that writing, “when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support” (275e5). For in the presence of their parent a discourse is “[a]live enough to protest on occasion

and to let themselves be questioned; capable, too, in contrast to written things, of responding when [the discourse's] father is there" (Derrida, 78).

For the sake of expediency, but also clarity, I consider it is best to defer for the time being our current question regarding the reason why gods would be displeased by the manner in which the rhetorician lives, and instead ask a less Olympic size question of similar form. So I ask, why would anyone be displeased by the manner in which the rhetorician lives? It appeared that the actual worthlessness of the rhetorician's lifestyle, if you will, did not stem from their not knowing what is truly best to do in life, but rather from the fact that the rhetorician does not make the appropriate effort to explore and discover what is truly best writ large. By this I mean what is truly best for themselves and others. For recall that the rhetorician only concerns themselves with what appears like the truth on the outside, or the likely, rather than the actual truth. It would seem that the consequences of only looking on the outside preclude the rhetorician's glimpsing their inner, true nature, and without knowing what they are, or even are like, how can the rhetorician actually know what is truly best for themselves. As such the rhetorician does not live well, for how could they if they don't even know what it truly best for themselves. However, would this amount to the rhetorician being displeased with themselves?

I think not because being in a state of displeasure would depend on the fact that one actually knows what is really pleasurable. Or more plainly put, how can one be displeased with oneself, if one does not even know oneself? Assuming that which is best for a person conveys actual pleasure, the rhetorician is blind and numb to what real pleasure is, since they do not know what is truly best for themselves. It would seem, then, that apprehending self-knowledge is related to pleasuring oneself. What about others? Why would someone else be displeased by the

manner in which the rhetorician lives? In like manner to the rhetorician failing to know themselves, we demonstrated that the rhetorician fails to properly get to know other members of their audience because they do not care about what is actually best for the individual people of a crowd. Rather, the rhetorician, who wants to persuade, concerns themselves with what will likely convince the crowd itself. In this case, though, perhaps we have failed too to properly account for the members of a crowd. Calling the critique of rhetoric as such is somewhat misleading, for we forgot that the critique takes the form of a warning. Specifically, it is Socrates warning Phaedrus not to be so charmed by Lysias, since a rhetorician the likes of Lysias does not actually know what is best for Phaedrus.

2.1 The Life of the Soul

Why, again, is Socrates so steadfast to disillusion Phaedrus' admiration of Lysias' speech? Socrates reasons that Lysias' speech is horrible for being impious on the ground that, "if [Eros] is a god or something divine—which he is—he can't be bad in any way; and yet our speeches just now spoke of him as if he were. That is their offense against Love" (242e1-3). At the core of Socrates' warning to Phaedrus not to believe Lysias' speech, is the selfsame consequent of living a life that displeasing the gods for failing to make the effort to look inward and explore what is truly best. In other words, Socrates is warning Phaedrus that, in being steered away from the lover by Lysias, he risks displeasing something of a divine nature. Socrates implies that giving one's favors to the lover could elicit the opposite effect of Lysias' order, which is to say that it would please something of a divine nature to give one's favors to the lover. We can compound this, too, with our knowledge that inherent in the rhetorician's displeasing the gods is their failure to properly account for the truth of their subjects (I mean this in both senses

of the word subject, that is, the subject of a speech and the subjects of a crowd). In this case, then, the lover's getting to know another, their beloved, could also elicit the opposite effect of not accounting for the truth of a subject in general, which is to say inherent in properly apprehending a subject is divine pleasure of some sort. In essence, reconsidering the lover is akin to reconsidering what is truly best, for what is truly best will be shown to be a life lived philosophically in search of truth.

What can the lover offer to a potential beloved that Lysias' *logos* cannot? In order to ask such a question, Socrates says, "we must first understand the truth about the nature of the soul, divine or human, by examining what it does and what is done to it" (245c3). What is now Socrates' second speech begins by his giving proof of the soul's immortality. Essential for our purposes is to note in what way is the soul described to be immortal. We're told that all souls are self-movers, and therefore immortal "because whatever is always in motion is immortal, while what moves, and is moved by, something else stops living when it stops moving. So it is only what moves itself that never desists from motion, since it does not leave off being itself" (245c6-9). We formally have our first glimpse of 'what' the soul is. More than being an immortal soul, however, inscribed in the proof immediately above is 'how' we are 'what' we are. Unceasing self-motion proves essential, for if the soul were to stop moving, however or if ever that is even possible, it leaves off being itself. Apprehending oneself, then, would appear to require one's putting oneself, or being compelled, into their soul's natural motion.

However, the proof of 'what' the soul actually is does not extend beyond accounting for its immortality. Reminiscent of my claim that wholly, truly apprehending oneself on earth is inconceivable, Socrates says, "To describe what the soul actually is would require a very long

account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like is humanly possible and takes less time” (246a2-4). The myth in Socrates’ second speech paints a picture of the life of the soul, during which godly souls and nongodly souls alike endeavor to glimpse the outermost rim of heavens. Comparing the endeavor it takes nongodly souls to reach their destination against the endeavor of godly souls will reveal the composition and activity of nongodly and godly souls, which will immediately connect us with that aforementioned idea of divine pleasure. The first description of what the soul is like goes as follows:

Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture. To begin with, our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is the opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business. (246a6)

I take seriously the implications of the chariot team image of a self-moving soul. By nature of being the chariot’s driver, “the charioteer is clearly the planning, calculating *logistikon*,” which invites us “to consider that intellect alone is a relatively impotent moving force” (Nussbaum, 214). Having the charioteer representative of intellect establishes a hierarchy of the soul in which intellect is the soul’s steersman, however, he alone cannot provide horsepower to motivate himself. As such we can consider the nongodly soul’s winged horses motivations, which are described as being generally good and bad. Although, we must qualify as much as we can at the moment the badness of the dark horse’s motivations. Technically speaking, the whole soul is

described as the *union* of a chariot team. My point in stressing this fact is that we should not think each part of the soul works in its own interest. They work as a unified team. If we imagine a different kind of team, say, a soccer team, the dark horse would be the player who simply doesn't play soccer as well as other players but who nonetheless has an interest in the whole team's well being. Implicit, then, in our speculation that the dark horse has an interest in the whole team's well being is the capacity to sense what is good for the team. I put this idea to the side for the moment to continue sketching out Socrates' image of the soul. The soul also has a set of wings. Socrates explains:

By their nature wings have the power to lift up heavy things and raise them aloft where the gods all dwell, and so, more than anything that pertains to the body, they are akin to the divine, which has beauty, wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort. These nourish the soul's wings, which grow best in their presence; but foulness and ugliness make the wings shrink and disappear. (246d4-e4)

We can infer from this that souls embodied in humans have lost their wings and have fallen from heaven owing to the fact that they no longer had any manner of keeping themselves aloft. Indeed, Socrates confirms this inference later, and attributes the self-moving soul to the confusion for why living things on earth “are said to include mortal and immortal beings” since they seem to move themselves (246b6-c5). What should be grasped from this is the idea that on earth, though it still moves itself, the soul is not its whole, perfect self in an incorporeal state. Needless to say, then, truly apprehending one's whole self would demand, at least, a soul regrow its wings back to health. For this reason we should keep in mind Socrates' mentioning that wings are most nourished and grow best in the presence of divineness. If it is the case that erotic madness is

actually something divine, we can suppose that the lover, or rather the wingless soul within the lover, has a great interest in being close to something divine.

With their wings nongodly souls fly around heaven attending to the godly souls who are “looking after everything and putting all things in order” (247e6). When it is time to feast the souls travel the steep climb to the high ridge of heaven beyond which lies their banquet. What is at this banquet to feast on “is without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to intelligence, the soul's steersman (247c6-8). We can take the gastronomic imagery of this Divine Banquet serving the most perfect Divine Beings to be the supreme source of nourishment for the souls. In fact, the next piece of information about the soul we are given is that “a god’s mind is nourished by [thinking] and pure knowledge, as is the mind of any soul that is concerned to take in what is appropriate to it” (247d1). It would appear, then, that the mind of a soul *ipso facto* possesses the capacity to know things and think deliberately, which is posited by the mind’s being able to concern for itself to take in what it knows is appropriate for it. Having a mind for what is good for itself, the mind is eager “to see the plain where truth stands” because “this pasture has the grass that is the right food for the best part of the soul, and it is the nature of the wings that lift up the soul to be nourished by it” (248c1).

Socrates goes on to detail that feasting on the Divine Beings as they really are leaves a soul “delighted at last to be seeing what is real and watching what is true, feeding on all this and feeling wonderful,” and he notes in particular that these souls have “a view of Knowledge—not the knowledge that is close to change, that becomes different as it knows the different things which we consider real down here. No, it is knowledge of what really is what it is” (247d5-9).

Since apprehending *real* things is described as the most nourishing thing that the soul can do for itself, particularly because it nourishes the best part of the soul, intellect, a natural attraction is suggest between the soul and reality “and that knowledge of reality is the natural good toward which the soul is oriented” (Griswold, 209). We can now say with certainty that every soul has reason, then, to experience the pleasure of receiving pure knowledge “because it allows the soul to prosper. And that is good because it is, simply, fulfilling” (109).

But not every soul gets to experience such pleasure, for the climb to feast at the Divine Banquet is treacherous. Socrates narrates that godly souls make the journey with ease, “since they are balanced and well under control” (247b3). However, owing to the mixture of a nongodly soul’s chariot team, we’re told, “The heaviness of the bad horse drags its charioteer toward the earth and weighs him down if he has failed to train it well, and this causes the most extreme toil and struggle that a soul will face. (247b1-6). Our earlier speculation about the dark horse being simply a bad team player seems to be holding up. The extreme toil and struggle that a nongodly soul’s dark horse causes does not seem to suggest that it is out of any wanton sabotage against the soul’s better interests, that is, its own interests too. That it is not motivated downward, but rather simply heavy, suggests that the dark horse maintains a shared interest in the whole soul’s reaching the Divine Banquet, which is to say that the dark horse has a sense, at least, for what is good. Though not explicitly invoking the image of the dark horse, Griswold accounts that, *dianoia*, the soul’s capacity to deliberately think “is not unconnected with the emotions” and feels “well contented” to be nourished (109). I mention this because the ability to feel satisfied, nourished, fulfilled, is doubtless a motivating feature of a soul. When we scrutinize the lover’s own motivations, particularly his erotic motivations, we’ll find that they are, in fact, the dark horse’s motivations. I mention this now to remind you of the charge originally brought on erotic

motivations, or passions, for not playing any role in knowing what is good. Since it is not suggested that a nongodly soul can make it to the Divine Banquet with only one horse, we plainly see that the dark horse does play a role in apprehending what is best for the soul.

The last detail about the heavenly life of the soul worth noting is the unfortunate experience of the souls who do not reach the Divine Banquet. During the treacherous climb Socrates tells how one struggling soul “raises the head of its charioteer up to the place outside” and “although distracted by the horses, this soul does have a view of Reality, just barely” (248a2). There’s talk that another soul, owing to its horses pulling it violently in different directions, “sees some real things and misses others” and that the remaining souls, which eagerly strain to keep up but are unable to do so, end up “trampling and striking one another as each tries to get ahead of the others” (248a6). The consequence of the commotion is that:

many souls are crippled by the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their plumage. After so much trouble, they all leave without having seen reality, uninitiated, and when they have gone they will depend on what they think is nourishment—their own opinions. (248b5)

This would suggest then, even in heaven, nongodly souls could fail to properly nourish themselves, and, perhaps, as with anything that is malnourished atrophy beyond a point at which it can no longer prosper for itself. Since the immortal soul cannot die, this state of foulness and ugliness must shed the soul’s wings and causes it to fall to a lesser life. But not all is lost. Socrates appeals to the law of Destiny that decrees “If any soul becomes a companion to a god and catches sight of any true thing, it will be unharmed until the next circuit; and if it is able to do this every time, it will always be safe” (248c3). The first part of this law indicates that

nongodly souls experience some sort of temporal cycles. Since souls are immortal these cycles cannot be considered as wholly new lives of the souls, which allows for the suggestion that a soul's past cycles have a bearing on their experience of their present cycle. As a simple illustration of this idea I consider how my Monday has a bearing on my Tuesday; waking up to a new day of the week is not enough to leave me unharmed from any consequences that may follow from the day beforehand.

The law continues, "If, on the other hand, [a soul] does not see anything true because it could not keep up, and by some accident takes on a burden of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, then it is weighed down, sheds its wings and falls to earth" (248c4). I surmise from the first stipulation of the law that in this second one Socrates is specifically relaying that if a soul does not see anything true in its present cycle of life because it could not keep up, and by some accident becomes forgetful and does wrong, then it is weighed down, sheds its wings and falls to earth. The reason for pause to clarify this point is found in the law's final stipulation. According to the law, at the point at which the soul falls to earth "the soul is not born into a wild animal in its first incarnation; but a soul that has seen the most will be planted in the seed of a man who will become a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or who will be cultivated in the arts and prone to erotic love" (248d4). The reason the soul is not born into an animal is because:

a soul that never saw the truth cannot take a human shape, since a human being must understand speech in terms of general forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity. That process is the recollection of the things our soul saw when it was traveling with god, when it disregarded the things we now call real and lifted up its head to what is truly real instead. (249b6-c5)

What this must mean is that, though the soul failed to see any real thing in its present life cycle, if in its cumulative life it did then it is destined to be born into a human being. Also, we now have the likes of the soul that will become a philosopher, which is noted to have seen the most real things in its lifetime. Another stipulation of Destiny is key for our want to study philosophy. Socrates explains 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 a man who practices philosophy without guile or who loves boys philosophically” (249a1). Contemplating why this may be the case, I turn now to the lover.

2.2 The Throes of Love

We last left off with the rhetorician’s failure to actually get to know the other in two senses. The rhetorician’s charming is warned against because the rhetorician does not actually know what is truly best for another person, but rather what is enough to convince someone or a crowd for their own rhetorical interests. In this case, then, the rhetorician is blocked in its own self-interest from getting to know the value of getting to know another. For clarity’s sake, the philosopher, who loves learning, would certainly have experienced the value of apprehending that which it knew not before, i.e., another thing. What follows from this for the rhetorician, is that they fail to conceive of themselves in any other state but their own. And moreover, we know that the rhetorician’s life is inherently a worthless state of living precisely for the fact that, in a sense, his soul moves in the opposite direction toward what is best for it. In other words, since the embodied soul fell downward from heaven into a lesser state of life, its better life is in the direction of up. It appears the rhetorician fails to point this way.

It is for this reason the rhetorician's way of life renders the possibility for the soul to truly apprehend itself again impossible. For now, we can assume this the case because implicit in displeasing the gods is the rhetorician's facing away from what is truly, wholly good, since what is divine is only good and the wings that could provide the rhetorician lift fail to be nourished by the divine which nourishes them. What is worse is that they remain ignorant to the fact that they are ignorant. But how can one get out of this state? Or better yet, how can one remember a memory that they do not remember, for is that not essentially how the rhetorician's soul fell to earth? It forgot what was best for it, and now it must be reminded. And on that note, let me remind you that Socrates says, "There's no truth to that story!—that when a lover is available you should give your favors to a man who doesn't love you instead, because he is in control of himself while the lover has lost his head"(244a5-7). The task at hand now is to tell the real story that the philosopher's experience of love is a "sort of madness given to us by the gods to ensure our greatest good fortune" (245b8).

Since the soul never ceases to be itself, no matter its state of being embodied, the soul's true nourishment remains ever the same. Having in mind now what the soul of a philosopher is like and how to care for it best, we can chronicle the lover's experience of being in love to account for the madness' divine nature and how being in love propels one into the best life possible. To underline an earlier point with this in mind, living on earth is never truly nourishing and by the same token never truly pleasurable for the soul. For "the complete divine wisdom" that a soul is delighted most by and nourished most by is, "for human being, permanently unavailable" (Nussbaum, 220). Devoid of its only true desire and true nourishment, life on earth must seem a vale of tears to the embodied soul. We could imagine suicide would seem the most viable solution for the embodied soul to return to its heavenly state, however, this is a false

assumption for two reasons. First, the embodied soul hasn't its wings to lift it up to heaven again upon death. Second, it assumes that the embodied soul even remembers what is truly good for it, which we know necessarily must not be the case given the fact that its fall from heaven was a consequence of forgetting what was truly good for it. Worsening the stakes of the embodied soul's vale of tears life, I speculate, is the soul's assuredness of living as such, if not reminded in some way to apprehend what it is missing out on. The soul's assuredness of this life is only reinforced since they "depend on what they think is nourishment—their own opinions" (248b5).

Seeing Beauty, though, the most easily discernible Divine Being on earth, in the figure of a beautiful boy who "has captured Beauty well" sends the philosopher into a state of disbelief and incomprehension, and he is "moved abruptly from here to a vision of Beauty itself" (250e3, 251a3). This is possible because of the human being's innate ability to recollect the forms of things it saw in heaven, and perceived them in their context as a whole. It is not that we can see Beauty on earth, but rather it is the *idea* of Beauty that we see in the context of the whole Beauty itself. However, though every human being can recollect these things, that does not mean they in fact do so. It is for this reason that the philosopher is unique in that sense. For recall, it is said that the philosopher is one who saw the most real things in heaven. We can imagine this has the effect of something like shooting an arrow at a target. A reminder of a Divine Being is far more likely going to hit the larger surface area that is the philosopher's memory than it would for someone with a smaller store of memory. Put differently, if there is no memory of a thing, then there is nothing to recollect. What is more "Socrates does not say that the colorless, shapeless, intouchable Beings are less real qua embodied in their colored, shaped, and even touchable images, even if the things in which they are embodied are less real" (Griswold, 105). This would mean, then, the likeness of Beauty captured in a beautiful boy is really something divine, the

likes of which we know the soul loves more than anything; and in this moment the philosopher begins to experience the throes of love, but, Nussbaum adds, “It would be futile...to try to say precisely whether experience or thought came first, so thoroughly they interpenetrate here, illuminating one another” (Nussbaum, 212). By this we are reminded of the soul’s *dianoetic* thinking since it is described in Socrates’ second speech to be able to sense in a way that toward which it, a part of the mind, is motivated—the truth.

The philosopher recollects what it is that he is actually seeing in the beauty of the boy, and adding to the philosopher’s current state of disarray is that his mind cannot see directly the forms of the things he’s seeing. The reason for this being that the actual Divine Beings can only be made out from their likenesses on earth, and therefore the mind’s intellect can only grasp their general forms, but not as they really are. In this moment of recollection, or anamnesis, the soul is “recalled to a sense of [its] primordial status” (Griswold, 114). This primordial sense of himself manifests in the beginning throes of love in the philosopher as a feeling that he “felt at an earlier time” (251a4). The specific primordial feeling that is being felt must be the soul’s true and natural attraction for the divine. This, then, explains why beautiful objects on earth trigger divine erotic madness in the philosopher, and why the philosopher sets out in a manner different from someone whose minds are not as easily reminded of the things it saw in heaven. However, whether or not the lover can articulate all this about himself yet, as Nussbaum says, is futile.

Though still, perhaps, unaware of its own and the beautiful boy’s true nature, the philosopher treats the boy with due deference because he thinks him a god. Still looking at the boy, the philosopher begins to warm, which melts the scabs of where his soul’s wings once were, and the boy’s divine beauty pours into the philosopher as nourishment to water the growth of his

wings (251b3). It is not until, I think, the soul begins to throb and seethe in pain from its wings growing back can we infer that it recollects and becomes aware of its true divine nature. My line of thinking here assumes that a process for lengthy questioning yielding rational insight into the actual forms of the Divine Beings is a consequence of the initial incomprehension and wonder sparked in the philosopher when he first laid eyes on the beautiful boy. Griswold confirms this thought, “These forms, we’re told, nourish the wings and the soul; and in remembering the forms we become again what we were. In this sense insight into the Beings is the same as one’s becoming oneself, one’s true or whole self” (Griswold 114).

The soul becoming oneself I consider to be its first instantiation of the call to action that is self-knowledge on earth, like the indistinct sense it has of the Divine Beings at this time its knowledge of itself is partial, however, it is characteristic of the philosophical way of life marked by a desire to make that sense of themselves more distinct. In these initial stages of being in love, the philosopher’s self-knowledge insight thus far is reminiscent of the dialogue’s opening line: where have you been, and where are you going? We can consider the initial stage of its wings regrowing as the soul remembering its past, divine life and true and only pleasure. Remembering its one true love “it swells up and aches and tingles as it grows them” (251c3). In the reverse manner, then, when the philosopher is separated from the beautiful boy, the soul is driven wild with pain from being “blocked in its desire” for the life it could only wish to return to (251d4). I say, then, that the beautiful boy becomes a reminder for love of a memory, and the pain that is subsided and replaced by joy and nourishment when the philosopher is physically close to the boy patterns the philosopher to desire being physically close to the boy.

We can thus contextualize that bodily desires of the philosopher “as guides is motivational: they move the whole person toward the good. But it is also cognitive: for they give the whole person information as to where goodness and beauty are...They have in themselves, well trained, a sense of value” (Nussbaum). As such when the beautiful boy is away and the soul slips back into a miserable state, the soul has a mind to actually desire the physical body that reminds it of the bliss it had in its primordial, heavenly life and nurtures the soul’s promise of a return to such a life. The question of how the soul is to regrow its wings, in order to rejoin its one true love, becomes part and parcel the question of how to make living an embodied life bearable. And what specifically makes the soul able to bear life on earth is being able to “once more suck in, for the moment, this sweetest of all pleasures,” which is subsequently the feeling that reminds the soul of its one true love and true fulfillment (251e6).

2.3 Apprehending Oneself

While a person worthy of reproach may be driven to surrender to erotic pleasure, “if the man who is taken by love used to be an attendant on Zeus, he will be able to bear the burden of [divine erotic madness] with dignity” (252c2). Since Socrates’ second speech affirms that philosophers were, in fact, attendants on Zeus (250b6), I can conclude with certainty that philosophers are able to “bear the burden” of divine erotic madness, which has been demonstrated above. Furthermore, the second speech tells us “everyone spends his life honoring the god in whose chorus he danced, and emulates that god in every way he can...And that is how he behaves with everyone at every turn, not just with those he loves” (252d1). It can be said, then, that our philosopher spends his life honoring and emulating the king of the gods and does so unconditionally. Since this is the case I would guess that particular attractions come naturally

to the philosopher, which is to say he is naturally inclined to take a liking to Zeus-like things. Importantly, I do not exclude actions from these “Zeus-like things”. For example, assuming Zeus is not ignoble, it would be dishonoring the king of gods if: (1) the philosopher took a liking for something ignoble and/or (2) acted ignobly. The second speech supports this idea as it says, “Everyone chooses his love after his own fashion...Those who followed Zeus...choose someone to love who is a Zeus himself in the nobility of his soul” (252d5). This line affirms that the philosopher is naturally inclined to love Zeus-like things.

We can infer also that the philosopher’s choosing a boy “after his own fashion” would mean the potential beloved is one who shares, or shows the potential to share, with the philosopher an inclination for philosophy. The philosopher makes certain that the one he loves “has a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others, and once they have found him and are in love with him they do everything to develop that talent” (252e4). If it helps, one can think of the description of the philosopher doing everything he can to develop a boy’s talent for philosophy as making the boy bearable for the lover to love, for wouldn’t the boy be unbearable for the philosopher to love if he did not accord to the philosopher’s natural desires? The reasoning behind the philosopher’s catering to the boy’s philosophical development is for the intention of drawing the boy “into being totally like themselves and the god to whom they are devoted” (253c2). This point is a mark of the philosopher’s desire to keep close to the boy whose physical presence assures the philosopher’s soul remains in good health in the mind and wings. Also, I believe there’s an added benefit for the philosopher to transform the boy into a philosopher in his own right, namely, the benefit of having the best kind of partner for discussion. Socrates alludes to such a partnership when he says of the philosopher, “this friend who has been driven mad by love will secure a consummation for the one he has befriended that is as beautiful and blissful as

I said” (253c2). The consummation between philosopher and boy is said to be beautiful and blissful for it is “any true lover’s heart’s desire” to set out in a philosophical manner, which we know prioritizes the power of a dialectical art of speaking.

How the philosopher handles the figure of his soul’s dark horse, I think, is emblematic of a hallmark of his philosophical practice, namely, discussion. Till now the figure of the dark horse has remained elusive. Now, though, Socrates has recourse to invoke the figure of the dark horse in order to put the philosopher’s own mental dialogue into a representative form. He says, “Remember how we divided each soul in three at the beginning of our story—two parts in the form of horses and the third in that of a charioteer? Let us continue with that” (253d1). The character of the horse on the right is described as “a lover of honor with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone” (253e1). We can consider the white horse to be the soul’s desire for divineness. As expected the dark horse is completely the opposite. He is “companion to wild boasts and indecency” and “just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined” (253e3). When the philosopher’s soul experiences the pangs of love both horses act according to their natures. The obedient horse is “still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame,” but the disobedient horse cannot resist trying everything it can to approach the boy “and suggest to him the pleasures of sex” (254b1).

We see here that Socrates is actually retelling what he has already narrated about the philosopher’s first sight of the beautiful boy. What is different now, however, is the shift in perspective from the philosopher to the philosopher’s soul, which all the more reason provides “how language is intermediate between the [Divine Beings] and sensible things” (Griswold, 115). For as was suggest above, the horses are symbolic of what senses out the general forms of

good like things, only to be digested, or discoursed, by the mind. Remember how the philosopher “shudders” when he first catches sight of the beautiful boy, “and a fear comes over him like those he felt at an earlier time” (251a4). This experience corresponds to the white horse’s fear of dishonoring the charioteer’s command by its sense of shame. Likewise, the philosopher’s distress of separation from the boy mimics the dark horse’s violent lunge for the boy and its doing “everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer” (254b1).

Further proof that an active and engaged dialogue yields fulfillment is the imagery of the chariot team actually discussing with one another in the lovesick philosopher. When the charioteer and white horse, seeing no end to their trouble, they “are led forward, reluctantly agreeing to do as they have been told” (254b4). Socrates does not describe the white horse and charioteer as being unwillingly and violently dragged forward by the dark horse. They agreed, however reluctantly, to be led forward by the dark horse’s goading. We can imagine that it must have been the case that the dark horse slyly convinced the other two to advance on the boy, for we’re told that they consent to the dark horse’s badgering. Reminiscent of the back and forth mix of the philosopher’s pain and joy described earlier, the charioteer and white horse have their chance too to delay the dark horse, who “give[s] in grudgingly only when they beg it to wait till later” (254d2). And lastly we find the patterning of the philosopher’s desires as before translated here as the charioteer training the dark horse by force and punishment until the horse “stops being so insolent” and is now “humble enough to follow the charioteer’s warnings, and when it sees the beautiful boy it dies of fright, with the result that now at last the lover’s soul follows its boy in reverence and awe” (254e8).

After all the philosopher's laborious effort to get close to the beautiful boy and cultivate in him a love for philosophy, the lover has finally made an impression on his beloved, who "allows his lover to talk and spend time with him" (255b4). The nature of their relationship is such that the desire they both feel for each other pours into and is absorbed by one another, which Socrates calls "backlove" (255c1-6). The effect of such love spurs all the same mixes of pain, pleasure, and incomprehension in the beloved, and since he is still young the beloved hasn't realized that "he has a mirror image of love in him" (255e1). So he yearns for his lover as equally as he is yearned for, and it is in this sense that divine erotic madness has provided the couple with a glimpse of their own self. Glimpsed is oneself in another, and like the other divine images on earth the philosopher gives an account for his beloved of what is truly best, who in return is provided with and becomes enamored with that which is truly best for themselves. In this sense, self-knowledge is a call to action; Eros moves us. By the mirror image of the lovers in one another both are transported outside of themselves to gain an image of themselves. It is only by this manner of living can the philosopher truly apprehend himself, that is, the soul rejoining the divine life that truly befits its nature. In the process, the lover makes an impression on his beloved such that the beautiful boy becomes the philosopher's second nature, which thus fosters a shared understanding between the two and the best possible partners to feed off each other. And in this sense, by the beloved becoming the philosopher's second nature, that is, one who is at "the highest, most perfect level of initiation, and...is perfect as perfect can be," the philosopher can become their best self, that is, their whole, perfect self when upon death he is ushered again "into the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all" (250b9).

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