

EROS, FREEDOM, AND CONSTRAINT
IN PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM AND PHAEDRUS

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Introduction. The present paper performs a close, reflective analysis of the two dialogues guided by the theme of the interrelation of freedom and constraint in the nature of eros. In the Phaedrus, the duality of eros is envisaged as a tension between freedom and constraint; the Symposium reveals diverse aspects of erotic ambivalence but interprets them in terms of a deepened, ontological understanding of freedom and constraint.

In the Phaedrus, Plato considers eros capable of effecting complete liberation from the bonds which constrain all nature (confusion, forgetfulness), provided it is conjoined with dialectical guidance and not vitiated by a confusion of either full rational autonomy or license with true liberation. The Symposium, however, sees the bondage of physis as the ineluctable bondage of time; transcendence thereof is the portion of the gods and is not vouchsafed to man. The theme, introduced by Phaedrus, that eros engenders arete is developed ontologically: the striving for eudaimonia, always vitiated by temporality (one aspect of which is forgetfulness), reaches the limit of its fulfillment in man's realization of arete. Such creative achievement, which springs from the intellectual vision reached through erotic ascent, does not free us, individually, from the bondage of temporality but succeeds in bringing the eternal, as a transforming power, within the fragmentation of time in which we have our being.

In leading the reader from a close reading of the Phaedrus to a similar study of the Symposium,¹ the present writer does not imply that this order of analysis necessarily reflects the order of composition of the two works.² She wishes to show that these two closely related dialogues, for all their scintillating complexity, do not lack coherence or continuity, but that Phaedrus, in the dialogue which bears his name, is led towards an understanding of the nature of eros and rhetoric by means of the dialectic of freedom and constraint which reaches its full articulation in the Symposium, when Diotima lays bare the

ontological conditions and the teleology of the natural and human will. We will seek to render these structures manifest in the course of a careful and meditative reading of the two dialogues, and finally to isolate them.

Phaedrus, in the dialogue Phaedrus, considers Lysias' speech fit for Socrates' consideration because it concerns, "in a way," eros. Socrates is a man touched and marked by eros and gifted with a knowledge thereof (257a), although he claims ignorance in other matters. Like Phaedrus, he is also possessed with the love of discourse. As an erotic man,³ and as one who has his being in the disclosiveness of speech, Socrates must seek to grasp eros--by means of the unifying and articulating power of language--in all its complexity and depth, if his concern is indeed to follow the Delphic injunction, rather than to impress his contemporaries by clever exercises, like the fashionable rationalizations of myth. Socrates, of course, is not investigating his personal idiosyncrasies, but the pathemata (cf. Gorgias 481d.) which define the human condition and are, indeed, echoed and shared by all nature. For once, Socrates has left the city walls and walked off the road; the wind, the trees, the flowing water, and the song-crazed cicadas in the heat and high light of noon are no longer closed in upon themselves in opaque reticence, but manifest powers neither quite natural nor fully divine which affect and inspire him.⁴ Unlike arete, justice, or courage, eros is not a strictly human endeavor but links us to inanimate nature as well as to the divine. If eros does not spring from human rationality, is it a blind natural force which overcomes our self-determination? The "speech of Lysias" portrays the lover as one distraught by an animal passion which deprives him of judgment and renders him incapable of managing his affairs. He is not self-possessed, but mastered by an affliction which no one in his right senses would even try to drive away; thus he should not be trusted or favored, but pitied and shunned. The non-lover, on the other hand, impresses Lysias as a rational, free agent whom one may rely on as a life-long friend. Why, then, is this paragon of excellence only negatively referred to as the "one not in love"? The truth is that all his self-control does not lead him to choose a life fundamentally different from that of the lover; he takes over his pursuits without exposing himself to emotional turbulence, but remaining safely locked up in the shelter of calculating self-interest. He seeks pleasure without risk, gratification without involvement; he will, if necessary, give of his money, but not of himself, and he lacks the humanity to confess, like Dylan Thomas . . . and I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb/ how at my sheet goes the same crooked worm (The Sap that through the Green Fuse).

The self-control shown by the Lysian non-lover is a far cry from that of Socrates in Alcibiades' arms (Symp., 219); it requires no self-denial. Both he and the lover to whom, supposedly, he is to be preferred are caricatures: the latter is enslaved by his blind, erotic drives, whereas the non-lover steals away his pleasures with the cunning born of emotional detachment and passes off his own inhumanity as the kind of excellence by which he will educate the youths he consorts with. Lysias' dialectical blindness has obscured the interpenetration of acting and suffering, freedom and bondage implicit in the human condition.

Socrates' reaction to the speech is as serious as it is ironical; he touches playfully on the sacred dimensions of eros. Socrates describes the effects of the speech on him in the very terms Lysias censured: it was daimonios, so that he (taking on the role of the imaginary youth addressed) was overcome; accepting the enthusiastic Phaedrus as his guide, he entered with him into "ecstasy." To be sure, this effect was not brought about, even unintentionally, by the repetitious and inept piece of rhetoric just read, but by the radiant presence of Phaedrus and the enchantment of the place. If Socrates is to speak of eros in a manner worthy of Sappho and Anacreon, he will not speak the language of mastery, full to the brim with sophistic vanity, but will allow himself to become like an empty vessel, receptive to the flow of inspiration. Phaedrus, however, who is so dominated by his passion for speeches as to disregard their subservience to the unconcealment of truth, "compels" Socrates to reiterate the argument of Lysias in a speech of his own. Though the "tale" which Socrates proceeds to invent is the means by which he brings to light the presuppositions and the hidden danger of Lysias' speech, he can only do so in disguise, his one garment pulled up over his head lest he falter in shame.

The "tale" is put into the mouth of a "cunning fellow" who attempts to seduce his beloved by the pretense that he does not love him (eros, as portrayed in the Symposium (203d), is cunning, resourceful, forever scheming). Unlike Lysias, he proceeds, with dialectical skill, to reveal the logos and ergon of eros, in disguise. He exposes the parasitism of the Lysian non-lover: like the lover, the non-lover desires and pursues the beautiful for the sake of pleasure. All men are motivated by desire for what is good,⁵ and all, moreover, experience and desire pleasure as a good. We share, however, no innate discernment of the hierarchical ranking of goods but are guided here by acquired opinion (doxa). Thus the striving for what is good, the ruler and leader of human life, finds a twofold expression: it asserts itself as a powerful,

instinctual desire for pleasure and as a life-orientation determined by rational persuasion (falling short of knowledge). One who can subordinate his desire for pleasure to "the opinion that prompts to right conduct" is self-controlled, his own master. Is he, for all that, truly free? His freedom is only partial; for he steers his course by opinion according to the heteronomy of the public self, instead of an authentic self-understanding. Socrates' passing off such partial freedom as though it were complete constitutes one aspect of the disguise which marks his first speech.

The lover, in Lysias' "inspired" characterization, is one whose better judgment is vanquished by hybriatic carnal desire; he is not master of himself, but a slave to pleasure. This enslavement is not, as Lysias would have it, brought about by some uncontrollable psychic affliction, but is self-caused through failure to control a component of one's own psyche (the "dark horse" of Socrates' second speech). The condition resulting from the hybriatic dominance of this power is thus not so much pitiable as it is shameful. The second aspect of disguise in Socrates' speech is his restrictive identification of eros with uncontrolled sexual passion.

If the logos of Lysian eros is self-caused enslavement, its ergon is what one might expect: one "mastered by desire and a slave to pleasure" will crave, besides pleasure, the illusion of power. Lacking the self-esteem born of inner strength, he must aggrandize himself, in his own eyes and in the eyes of the youths he courts, at the expense of others. He will therefore, while he is himself in bondage, attempt to stifle the intellectual and moral development of the object of his lust, keeping him, above all, away from philosophy which would teach him contempt for the slave seeking to master him. This "lover" will seek to keep his "beloved" physically a weakling, and to deprive him of family, friends, and property sufficient for independence. In a word (which is not Plato's), the bondsman of pleasure will treat the object of his lust as men have treated women through the centuries.

Association with such a lover is not only harmful but singularly unpleasant because, being himself under compulsion, he allows no freedom to his beloved but seeks to compel his total devotion. When the lover's ravenous hunger has abated and he has come to his senses, he is not, for all that, a free man, for he has never mastered himself. For the time being, he has come under the dominion of "another set of rules and controllers" who at least manage to tighten his purse strings and improve his reputation. He now lives in mortal fear of relapsing

into his former bondage, against which he has acquired no safeguards, so that his only expedient is to run away, breaking his promises and deserting the youth.

Socrates has made apparent that Lysias, in his speech, identified eros with hybristic lust which overpowers rational judgment and thus constitutes reprehensible madness. He has also shown that the non-lover, whom Lysias praised as a free man, has not encountered passion with strength, so as to be borne upward and outward on the crest of its wave, but has shunned it to serve a more niggardly master, his worldly self-interest. Socrates refuses to praise this non-lover whose merits are, at best, the absence of the other's excesses. We have thus been shown abject enslavement, blasphemously identified with eros, but not the nature and achievement of freedom.

Socrates now drops his sophistic disguise in a dramatic turning brought about, not by the liberty of indifference, but through the constraint of the daimonion, μανικόν γέ τι καὶ ἡ ψυχῆ (242c).⁶ He gives Phaedrus credit for engendering the redeeming discourse⁷ because the latter recognizes the "utter shamelessness" of the preceding speeches. Eros (as distinct from its perverted expression in lust) causes shame; (cf. Phaedrus' and Alcibiades' speeches at Symposium 178e, 215e-216c) and shame presupposes both freedom and the restraint of assuming responsibility. Only a person touched by mania, whether by eros or, like Stesichorus, by "music," is able to engender a discourse which constitutes a rite of purification and can avert the threat of blindness regarding the nature of eros and of our intrinsic freedom.

Stesichorus had slandered Helen, a woman distracted by love. The blindness, the sudden extinction of light which afflicted him until his recantation stands in striking contrast to the dazzling light of noon which engulfs Phaedrus and Socrates with its brilliance⁸ as the latter begins his palinodia to let the true nature of eros shine forth, instead of courting popular acclaim by shallow and deceitful speech.

Socrates first shows that the distinction between human freedom and bondage does not coincide with that between sanity or total self-possession and being overcome by passion or inspiration. Mania need not consist in the hybristic dominance of one's animal drives and is thus not necessarily degrading and detrimental, but may, if "bestowed on us as a gift of the gods," be the well-spring of our greatest blessings. Etymology, he argues, supports the claim that no shame or censure was attached to eros before the age of sophistry which made man, rather than the gods we ought to serve (274a), the

measure of all things.

Socrates describes three forms of mania which is not "brought on by mortal maladies" but is a liberating power arising from a "supernatural release from the conventions of life" (265a). Best known of these is the divine madness of prophecy, granted to the prophetess at Delphi, the priestesses at Dodona, and the Sibyl who "with raving mouth utters solemn, unadorned, unlovely words; but she reaches out over a thousand years because of the god within her" (Heraclitus, Fr. 92, Wheelwright translation). Since the benefits of prophecy are quite evident, no one denies them. Purgative or redemptive madness is less widely acknowledged but has brought release to those afflicted with some "ancient guilt" and has thus led to the establishment of rites of purification. Sublime poetry is written by the inspired and possessed, whereas those who merely have a sober mastery of technique, by comparison, are paltry windbags.

We must therefore not fear, but welcome with awe the disruptive mania which pries us loose from the confining security and self-satisfaction of our everydayness and lays us open to divine incursion. To show, however, that eros is the supreme form of such mania will be especially difficult, not only because the benefits of eros cannot simply be pointed to, but because we are acutely aware of the ambivalence of erotic phenomena. To show that eros is the highest form of mania requires not only a discourse on mania but an exposition of the nature and destiny of the human psyche.

Psyche, of its nature, is autonomous; as the un-derived, ungenerated, imperishable arche of motion which imparts motion to bodies, it cannot be dominated by body. Psyche is the self-motion which brings all things into their order of presencing. No human discourse can encompass psyche and render it manifest (246b);⁹ but we must explain, using the language of analogy, how this autonomous power can suffer as well as act, and how it can assume the yoke of mortality. Psyche, Socrates explains, is not simple but επιφόρα δυνάμει (246a), resembling a team of winged horses guided by a chariot-eer. Divine psyche, in its winged freedom, "soars on high and is responsible for all order in the universe" because its component powers are harmonious. Human psyche, however, is unstable and in constant danger of losing its wings because its motion springs from a disparate team engaged, of necessity, in ceaseless tension and strife. If its wings, capable of carrying all that is heavy "to where the race of gods dwells" fail to counteract the downward pull of its unruly motive power, it sinks into forgetfulness and, falling, enters into composition

with a mortal body.¹⁰ Being of itself deathless, however, it is not indissolubly bound thereto but may regain the wings of its freedom by striving to enhance its kinship to the divine nature by self-mastery. Whence does the human psyche in its fallen state, afflicted with "forgetfulness" and "weakness," derive the motivation and strength to accomplish this?

Every human soul has had some glimpse of pure reality (ousia ontos ousa) which lies beyond the magnificent celestial orbits, in the place beyond the heavens, and is perceived by reason (nous) alone, as those souls who are not divided against themselves are carried along in the cyclical revolution of the outer heavens.¹¹ The intellectual contemplation of pure reality itself is the "divine banquet," the feast of psyche, whence it derives the nourishment for the wings that bear it aloft. Those torn souls, however, whose incompetent charioteers struggle vainly against the wildness of the "dark horse" cannot participate in the orbital revolution but move at random, confusedly, and in desperate competition so that, instead of being sustained by truth, they must "feed on the food of illusion."¹² The bondage of forgetfulness, however, is neither complete nor irrevocable unless the soul, in consequence of its life choices after incarnation, further forfeits its freedom. Even the soul which, after its human incarnation, has entered the life of a beast may at some time return to the disclosive life of man (249c). For each human being, there remains the possibility of recall which can motivate the labor of ascent. That which recalls us to our inherent freedom and which, in stimulating the renewed growth of wings, holds out the promise of restoring our original unblemished wholeness is the encounter with beauty, which awakens in us the memory of the luminousness of reality when we beheld it unconcealed. (Cf. the lovers' search for wholeness as portrayed in the speech of Aristophanes in the Symposium with Phaedrus 250c.)

Given that we are imprisoned in the body "like oysters in a shell," and that the clarity of our vision is dimmed by the veil of forgetfulness, encounter with beauty is disturbing and painful. It casts us into affliction and perplexity (a-poria), for the very reason that we are not in a condition of absolute poverty (penia), yet deprived of our original wholeness. This distracting passion, awakened by the sting of beauty and springing from both poverty and resource, is eros. (This, of course, is made explicit in the tale of the parentage of eros in Symposium 203b-e.)

The upheaval of eros is capable of shattering the walls of our prison and imparts upward momentum to the

newly liberated soul (it "fathers wings"). The multitude, however, who have forfeited their lives to the petty concerns which pass for realities are threatened by its force and will revile it as a disruptive madness. It is true that no human motivation is free from ambivalence; and the greater passions connote greater dangers. One whose power of remembrance has been nearly extinguished due to a lack of self-control in either his pre-incarnate state (so that he barely glimpsed reality), or in consequence of his life-choices after incarnation, will respond to the presence of beauty with shameless lust. A sense of awe does not hold him back from laying his hands on the beautiful so as to exploit it for his pleasure. He is the Lysian lover whose madness degrades him and constitutes a bondage to the level of the bestial.

The mania of eros must be conjoined with vigilant self-discipline; the lover must tame the powerful "dark horse" which "lowers its head and elevates its tail," so that he may continue to follow the beloved, but to do so with reverence and awe. What enables him to exercise restraint is the call of memory, which is akin to Socrates' daimonion.¹³ In particular, the lover's soul retains the image of the god it once followed which it detects, loves, and strives to bring to clarity of manifestation in the person of the beloved. Eros is thus a creative principle (cf. Diotima's speech, Symposium 208c-209e); for it re-creates the divine image. In the intimacy of their relationship, the roles of lover and beloved become assimilated,¹⁴ so that they share this creative task in seeking to "subdue the source of evil" within themselves and set free "the source of goodness."

The lover, to answer Socrates' initial question, must be both inspired or possessed and self-disciplined; his passion must be tempered with the restraining awareness of the incursion of the divine into human life if it is to open up to him the path toward liberation so that he may be another's guide. He who is not touched by eros, on the other hand, can offer no more than the transitory benefits of worldly self-discipline which cannot free him from "the dark place beneath the earth," so that he will have to "float for 9000 years around the earth and beneath it--a fool" (257a).

After Socrates' palinodia in praise of eros, Phaedrus shifts the focus of concern back to rhetoric with seeming abruptness. There is, however, a deeper reason for this shift: as the pre-condition for realizing the creative and liberating potential of eros is the conjunction of mania with self-discipline, so it is the discipline of dialectic, not the license of rhetorical persuasion,

which enables the lover to "pour the drafts of inspiration" which he draws "from Zeus" like a Bacchant into the soul of the beloved youth (253a), so as to undertake his philosophical guidance and join with him in the generation of the divine image.

Phaedrus, who has been moved and guided by Socrates' last speech, needs to clarify the criteria which mark off philosophical discourse from unbridled speech; for, in his omnivorous passion for the products of rhetoric, he has consumed poison as eagerly as nourishment or medicine. The twofold nature of discourse must now be delineated as the twofold nature of mania has been; for both eros and discourse are required for the liberation of the human psyche. Eros is the motive power, discourse the guide of psyche out of the distress of aporia and through the difficulties of the ascent.

Phaedrus and Socrates thus set out anew to accomplish a task of division whose starting point, as it soon turns out, cannot be the popular dispute about the respective merits of written and spoken discourse (258a-d). Phaedrus, who is inept in the use of Socratic division, proposes that they make a start by questioning "Lysias or any other author, past or future, of political or non-political writings, in verse or in prose" (258d), for the sheer pleasure of such an exercise. Socrates, with customary irony, remarks "we have, I think, plenty of time," and goes on to tell the enchanting tale of the crickets. Phaedrus, who is overcome with the love of discourse, may be admired (at least) by the crickets, because his interests, unlike those of "slaves" or "drowsy sheep," are not circumscribed by his worldly cares, but he has yet to win the love of those Muses who "above all the others, sing the most sweetly in their preoccupation with heavenly things, and with discourse mortal and divine" (cf. Phaedo 60e-61b).

What is the criterion which divides discourse that functions as the soul's guide towards liberation from disreputable persuasion? Socrates' profound answer is that it is adherence to the confines of truth. As a "lover" who is enslaved to pleasure will use the "beloved" to gain what he craves, so the demagogue bound to the advancement of his worldly interests manipulates public opinion in their service. In each case, one who is himself unfree unscrupulously dominates and makes use of others.¹⁵ Rhetoric cannot claim moral neutrality,¹⁶ not only because, since its function is to influence and guide the soul, it is responsible for the "harvest" it reaps, but because the very concept of techne excludes such neutrality.¹⁷ A rhetorician who has no grasp of the truth will be unable to comprehend seemingly disparate

elements into an intelligible whole and to articulate such a whole so as to reveal its inherent structure, thus allowing reality to shine forth in the luminosity of its unconcealment which is the beauty eros seeks. He will, instead, be led, by degrees, to affirm the opposite of what he intended and end up--like the "victims" of the Socratic elenchus--in unbecoming confusion. One thus misled cannot function as the leader "in whose footsteps" Socrates will follow "just as though he were a god" (266b).¹⁸

Phaedrus, however, is still unwilling to equate the techne of the dialectician with rhetoric.¹⁹ Socrates concedes that an element is still missing but insists that it is not acquaintance with the technicalities and petty niceties of composition which fill the manuals of rhetoric. To claim that such knowledge will render one accomplished in discourse is like holding that someone who can "induce a fever, lower one's temperature," and make people "vomit, or again, move their bowels" as his fancy dictates can claim to be a physician. What is lacking is knowledge about the "patient," the human psyche, both as to its general nature and cosmic status and regarding its individual characteristics. The path to such accomplishment is long, thorny, and arduous; but even the devil's advocate cannot defend taking a short-cut. To do so would be to gratify one's "fellow slaves" instead of seeking to attain liberation and to guide others thereto by means of the discipline which constitutes service to the gods.

The question of the value of the written word can only now be raised, since now the purpose of discourse and the criteria by which to judge it have come into view. Written discourse will bring about forgetfulness rather than anamnesis, for it encourages fixed responses to external stimuli rather than inward searching; and it will substitute the conceit of mastery for the genuine wisdom expressed in competent judgment. Being but a shadowy ghost, it sows its seeds "with a pen" into "inky water." The dialectician, on the other hand, will implant in the soul of one whom he loves living words that are "able to help themselves and help him who planted them. . . can transmit their seed to other natures and cause the growth of fresh words in them, providing an eternal existence for their seed; words which bring their possessor to the highest degree of happiness possible for a human being to attain" (277a). Written discourse is dependent and sterile, whereas living, spoken discourse possesses causal autonomy and the ability to generate. The teacher will wait with the requisite patience for his harvest to ripen; but the writer, lest, by not publishing, he perish, forces his plants into premature bloom.

Nevertheless, we must not deceive ourselves: you, the reader, have before you writing about writing. We must give writing its due: it is an absorbing form of play capable of providing reminders to counteract forgetfulness. One who writes, not as an end in itself, but in subservience to truth, and who has the ability "to demonstrate, from his own mouth, the poverty of his writings"--who, in other words, is not abjectly dominated by the petty pursuit of "twisting phrases this way or that," so as to aggrandize himself among the likeminded, but writes with the freedom of play springing from the seriousness of his commitment--ought to be called, not a speechwriter, but a lover of wisdom. Despite its poverty, writing is valuable; for the living spark is easily extinguished and the living voice silenced.

Eros, then, is not the shameful bondage to the subhuman criticized by Lysias, nor is discourse, as practiced by Lysias, the activity of a free man, but eros as well as discourse must yoke passion or inspiration to discipline and restraint and maintain between them the equipoise of dynamic tension. Through the conjunction of such eros and such discourse, friends may attain the freedom one has who is "beautiful within" and who is not overpowered by acquisitiveness and worldly concerns. They will be capable of true friendship, because they "hold everything in common."²⁰

Whereas the Phaedrus led us out unto the open roads in the shimmering heat of a summer day and made us listeners to the conversation that took place by the river bank, the Symposium is an account of festivities the enchantment of which brightened a long winter night. Complex as it is with its varied offering of speeches, the account is set within a double frame of narration which emphasizes the remoteness of the actual occasion and recreates it with distilled clarity rather than with fidelity to irrelevant detail.²¹

Neither Appollodorus nor Aristodemus are disinterested reporters; both are minor followers of Socrates devoted to him and to significant discourse with a fervor springing from their awareness of their own insufficiency and resembling, in the eyes of conventional society, slavish imitation or even madness.²² The whole dialogue or feast of speeches, in its consummate artistry, is thus put into the mouths of two men with no pretension to great ability, but who are conscious of their own need and venerate the erotic-demonic power of Socrates.²³

Just as Penia, in Socrates' tale of the parentage of Eros (203b-c), comes uninvited to beg at the banquet

of the gods, so Aristodemus arrives unbidden (and, comically enough, without even Socrates) at the feast of "the good" (an obvious play on Agathon's name) and conceives the discourse which he hands down to us. Such conception, however, does not happen spontaneously, without effort, as a wick will draw water from the fuller to the emptier vessel (175e); it requires--if we may harken back to the Phaedrus--passionate striving conjoined with restraining discipline. The celebration, indeed, is marked by unusual sobriety: there is to be no heavy or compulsory drinking, and the flute girl is dismissed--until she (or her sister) re-enters as the guide of the drunken Alcibiades.

Phaedrus, still the father of speeches, is no longer satisfied with clever speeches extolling trivia but is preoccupied with his awareness of the divinity and primordial power of eros and disturbed by the lack of daring which has kept the poets and prose writers from praising eros in a manner worthy of him. This task is now laid upon the celebrants all of whom are dedicated, in some way, to the service of Eros, Aphrodite, or Dionysos (177e), and all of whom have been touched by τῆς φιλοσόφου μανίας τε καὶ βαρυφίας (218b). The sequence of speeches, significantly, progresses from left to right. Let us listen, then, to the initiating discourse of Phaedrus.

Eros, Phaedrus asserts, is the primordial creative principle responsible for the generation of a cosmos from primeval chaos; thus eros is the giver of the greatest goods. Unlike Socrates in the palinodia of the Phaedrus, Phaedrus himself cannot accomplish a meaningful linkage of the cosmic perspective with human concerns: he tells us, quite abruptly, that human lovers are to each other the greatest good because their mutual eros is the star which guides them to live noble and beautiful lives. Why so? Because eros is striving for the beautiful and hence shame before the ugly and base. Eros engenders arete in the polis and in the individual because the powerful motivation of the desire for beauty liberates us from triviality and self-seeking and, most importantly, from the bondage of fear.

Lovers alone will be fearless enough to face death for one another's sake. Their courage will make them powerful, although they may be outnumbered or lacking in strength. By his stress on courage in the face of death, Phaedrus links, in the reader's mind, the death of Socrates, who is committed to eros and whose power lies in his readiness to be the sole witness to the truth (Gorgias, 472b), with that of Alcestis (who, as

one allowed to return from Hades, may have been gifted, like Diotima, with clarity and depth of vision), and with that of Achilles, the selfless purity of whose devotion is shown by the fact that he was apparently not even the lover, but the beloved.²⁴ He implicitly contrasts the death of Socrates with Orpheus' descent into Hades by portraying Orpheus (in a departure from the myth) as a mere "minstrel" (another favorite of the crickets, perhaps) who was incapable of renunciation and who, because of his possessiveness and fear, was shown a mere image of Eurydice and mistook the image for reality. Phaedrus remarks, in conclusion, that Eros is the eldest and most honored of the gods and inspires us to realize arete and eudaimonia.

Phaedrus has adopted Socrates's perspective, in preference to that of Lysias, but he has done so with more enthusiasm than understanding, neglecting to tie his right opinion down by "the tie of the cause" (Meno 98a). As noted, the relationship between eros as a cosmic principle and as a human motivation remains obscure. Moreover, if the primordial creative principle is, indeed, the striving for beauty, the existence of ugliness and evil requires explanation. Yet their existence is not only a fact but is presupposed by the very notion of striving or desire. Phaedrus is unaware that our need for liberation and guidance is rooted in the intrinsic ambivalence of the human condition. He can neither explain why eros, in particular, is the supreme liberator and guide (i.e., why the striving for beauty should be capable of destroying fear), nor can he (who wishes that states and armies could be made up of lovers in the conventional sense) articulate the process of liberation.

Pausanias, who identifies eros with sexual love among the inhabitants of the polis, recognizes in this phenomenon the ambivalence which Phaedrus' unqualified praise had disregarded. He does not, however, trace it to an ambiguity essential to human nature, but to a duality in the possible object of eros and in the manner of its consummation. As a disciple of the sophists, Pausanias holds that all actions, taken strictly as such, are morally indeterminate but become praise- or blameworthy according to the manner in which they are carried out.²⁵

What, then, are the criteria which divide base from noble or "celestial" eros? Vulgar eros lusts after the ephemeral beauty of youthful bodies; since its object is transitory, it is itself unstable and its behavior is erratic and unproductive. Noble eros, on the other hand, strives for abiding value; it treasures those who exemplify arete and sophia and is hence constant and

beneficial. How do these two aspects of eros differ in their phenomenal manifestation? The difference, as perceived by Pausanias, is slight; apart from his emphasis on constancy, he makes a weak attempt to distinguish them by sexual preference. Both forms of eros achieve sexual expression, neither demands self-mastery, and both, in fact, are forms of servitude (183a-b; 184c-d). Either lover will humiliate himself by throwing himself at the feet of the beloved, sleeping upon his doorstep, and offering to perform services which would shame even a slave (183a). Servitude is ignoble if incurred for the sake of physical gratification, but noble if assumed freely for the sake of arete, in which case the love of wisdom will become conjoined with the love of beautiful boys (184d).

It is clear the Pausanias cannot make his distinction between base and noble eros apply to the phenomena and ground it in human nature. His long and pompous discourse²⁶ does not, as we are led to expect, teach us to choose freedom over servitude but manages only to draw a pseudo-distinction between two servitudes one of which is set apart from the other by conjoining it with further pursuits. Moreover, the notion of voluntary servitude is quite paradoxical: either the lover associates freely with the beloved so as to benefit him, in which case he will not flatter him and throw himself at his feet, or he is crazed by passion, in which case he is not free (compare Socrates' intended rebuke of Hippothales in Lysis 210e). Since Pausanias is unable to differentiate between base and noble eros according to their nature, he avails himself of the crutch of convention in that he contrasts the ambivalence of the Athenian attitude to eros with the unqualified praise (attributed to inertia and verbal awkwardness) or the unqualified censure (attributed to illiberality) accorded to eros elsewhere.

What is yet more disconcerting is that Pausanias, who asserts that all gods must be praised (180e), has only censure for the vulgar Eros and Aphrodite. He thus effects not an articulation, but a radical separation by rejecting one of the two aspects of eros which he has not succeeded in distinguishing adequately. Given this radical separation, he no longer has an evident basis for comprising both aspects by the common concept of eros. He thus treats language as arbitrary.

Pausanias has spoken as a sophist who lacks the skill of the dialectician and who, though he correctly perceives the need for a division, is unable to make it. To use an image from the Phaedrus (260d), he sings the

praises of an ass's shadow masquerading as a horse in that he extolls conventional erotic practice and the servitude it is seen to entail as though it were the eros which liberates because it is directed toward the abiding.

Erixymachus endorses Pausanias' distinction between two forms of eros but criticizes him for restricting his analysis to human relationships and for seeking to eliminate one of the two forms. Like Phaedrus, Erixymachus thinks of eros as a primordial cosmic principle, indeed, as the manifestation of the natural will. As such, it sustains the generative tension of opposed tendencies throughout nature. There are two forms of eros, themselves in conflict, which are distinguished by the orientation of their desire and by the results of its consummation. Detrimental eros disregards measure and order; it allows one of the conflicting strivings to achieve dominance by usurping the rights of the other, thus creating an unhealthy, harmful condition of hybris-tic excess. Beneficial eros, by contrast, brings about the reconciliation and balanced attunement of opposed tendencies so that each of them, held in check by the other, is free to yield its intrinsic benefits.

Erixymachus the physician sees no difficulty in relating the human psyche to its natural and cosmic context. He perceives a straightforward continuity between the twofold eros of the body "with respect to repletion and evacuation" and the conflict of the soul face to face with human beauty (all the while, of course, Aristophanes is hiccupping, gasping, gargling, and sneezing in the background, thus involuntarily serving his muse).

The sciences of eros span the human and the natural, the sacred and the profane; they comprise medicine, gymnastics, agriculture, astronomy, music, and divination. All of these endeavor, as Erixymachus points out with a reference to Heraclitus (Fr. 51), to bring that which is torn apart by conflict to agree with itself. Erixymachus faults the cryptic speech of Heraclitus, as though that powerful thinker and poet could not communicate the banal observation that music requires harmony between "the high and the low." The beneficial eros of Erixymachus achieves the "obvious" harmony of compromise, not the "hidden" harmony of polemos, the "father and king of all." (Cf. Heraclitus, Fr. 53-54, 58.)

What is the relation between the two faces of eros? Unlike Pausanias, Erixymachus does not seek to repress and eliminate maleficent eros. Beneficial eros, the striving for appeasement and harmony, is quite capable

of taming its opposite, so that we may enjoy the enticing pleasures which the latter holds out to us to the greatest possible extent while avoiding painful consequences.

Thus, whereas Phaedrus praised eros with indiscriminate enthusiasm as our liberator, Pausanias rejected all but his own obscurely understood form of erotic practice as shameful enslavement; but Erixymachus thinks of freedom as a steering clear of the detrimental results of excess by means of diplomatic mediation which soothes the inescapable contradictions of our existence and of all nature into calm equilibrium. Such attunement does not come about spontaneously, but requires the skill and constant vigilance of every form of techne.

Aristophanes will praise eros in a sharply divergent way: not as the achievement of mastery through relentless vigilance or through human ingenuity and skill, but as a primitive power we are delivered unto and whose benefits we reap in self-surrender. Aristophanes' encomium--which is presented as myth (appropriately, since it stresses the primeval power of eros) and in the language of comedy--may provoke the ridicule of the polished physician, but the latter is not without apprehension that the hidden profundity and tragic dimensions of Aristophanes' comic fancy may put his own "enlightenment" to shame (189b-c).

To praise eros as the healer and guide capable of leading us to achieve what measure of eudaimonia is within human reach, we must, Aristophanes asserts, come to understand human nature and its pathemata, for the power of eros derives from an ancient violation of our nature. Its work does not consist in attuning opposed natural strivings, but in healing a cleft which has destroyed our natural wholeness, and in leading together those who are akin to one another but have suffered estrangement.

In their original wholeness, human beings resembled, in their appearance and (comically enough) in their manner of locomotion the celestial bodies from which they descended. The image recalls the Parmenidean sphere in its inviolate unity and timeless self-sufficiency. Their freedom and natural perfection prompted them to seek domination and challenge the prerogative of the gods. In punishment, their will was paralyzed; for after Zeus halved them, they were overpowered by a relentless desire for one another. Their eros was a consuming, indiscriminate, and grotesque passion which, since it was incapable of creativity or fulfillment (being divorced from sexuality), condemned

them to perish in each other's arms. Only when Zeus, in pity, conjoined eros with sexuality did it cease to be an absurd compulsion. Eros now could bring momentary fulfillment, thus freeing the will and restoring to men the initiative to carry on their lives; and it could issue in generation, which is the achievement of unity and permanence under the aspect of time. Eros thus is the deeply ingrained longing of the dispersed and estranged for reunification and healing which, now that it is tied to the gratification and generation our animal nature makes possible, engenders the diverse and complex manifestations of the human will.

Eros cannot completely fulfill itself in its sexual consummation, because we remain separate and cast into the alienation of time. It expresses itself as a cryptic longing springing from the burden and promise of an obscure memory which gives to absence its urgency and pain. It is a lack or need reasserting and renewing itself in its very fulfillment, because that fulfillment is always in time. This tragic awareness which hides within the comic playfulness of Aristophanes' account reaches poignant expression in the fifth poem of Hart Crane's Voyages, a section of which is given below.

. . . the cables of our sleep so swiftly filled,
Already hang, shred ends from remembered stars.
One frozen trackless smile . . . What words
Can strangle this deaf moonlight? For we

Are overtaken. Now no cry, no sword
Can fasten or deflect this tidal wedge,
Slow tyranny of moonlight, moonlight loved
And changed . . . "There's

Nothing like this in the world," you say,
Knowing I cannot touch your hand and look
Too, into that godless cleft of sky
Where nothing turns but dead sands flashing.

"-And never to quite understand!" No,
In all the argosy of your bright hair I dreamed
Nothing so flagless as this piracy

Eros thus leads us into perplexity; the lovers surprised by the limping Hephaestus with his assortment of tools cannot even say what it is they want from one another, even though unfulfilled desire perpetually renews their bond.

If we show respect for the gods, however (or, to use the language of the Phaedrus, subdue the hybridic tendencies of the "dark horse"), eros will lead us to one who is akin to us (with the kinship, perhaps, of the

shared divine image). Through the guidance of eros we shall thus, in some measure, regain our original wholeness and autonomy which, since our punishment, is the goal of all human striving, and shall thus become makarios kai eudaimonas.

In anticipation of Agathon's speech, Socrates is stricken with "fear and confusion" (194a), because Agathon, with his brilliant gifts, is enticed by the love of demos and turns away from philosophical eros which engenders inhibiting shame.²⁷ He readily follows Phaedrus' injunction to speak unimpeded, casting off the yoke of Socratic dialectic which would bind him to truth. For such exchanges, he remarks (with unconscious irony, given the proximity of Socrates's death), there will always be plenty of time.

Agathon begins, nevertheless, in the Socratic manner: before praising eros for the gifts he bestows on us, we must make apparent the essential nature of the giver. Agathon presupposes that a giver of gifts must have an abundance, and the recipient need of that which is given. He repeats his earlier mistake in that he assumes that the psyche will passively receive gifts from a source in which they abound, requiring no intermediary but the "wick" of proximity which will conduct what is needed from the fuller to the emptier vessel (175d-e).

In contrast to the eros of Aristophanes, which is a compulsion springing from a primal need, Agathon's eros is characterized by liberty. This eros is a law unto itself, having superseded the reign of anangke (195c, 197b), and neither compels nor suffers compulsion (196b), so that, whatever it does or desires is--in that it is done freely--just (196c). The near-comic absurdity of this libertarian eros envisaged, ironically, by a prize-winning tragedian, is matched only by his supposition that, since the strongest drives and passions are the erotic, eros, the uncontrolled expression thereof, must be the epitome of sophrosyne and andreia (196c-d). Liberty and license thus pass for justice, and the untrammelled pursuit of all desires, rather than self-control, for arete in its particular aspects.²⁸

How this self-indulgent eros, dwelling in the soft lap of luxury, can contrive the ceaseless generation of all living beings (197a) and the varied, ingenious, and disciplined forms of poiesis (197b) remains unintelligible. One can imagine it capable of random motion, but scarcely of the controlled endeavor springing from consistent orientation toward the noble and beautiful which, as Agathon rightly remarks, is the source of πάντ' ἀγαθὰ καὶ θεοῖς καὶ ἀνθρώποις (197b). One would, instead,

expect it to be afflicted by the inertia of satiety.

Let us briefly retrace the theme of freedom and constraint as it winds through these five speeches.

Phaedrus praises eros as a divine power which ennobles and liberates, but is unaware of the essential lack of autonomy in human nature that gives eros its foothold, or of the ambivalence, if not multivalence, of the expressions of eros. Pausanias is disturbed by the ambivalence of eros and thus proposes to restrict and direct it by nomos. Erixymachus perceives a duality of eros in all nature, and in man precisely insofar as man fits into the continuum of nature and is in no way singled out in his being. Yet it is man alone who can control this ambivalence of erotic tendencies by the tools of techne, thus freeing himself from subjection, perhaps, to natural forces such as climatic adversities or disease, but scarcely from his own "heart of darkness."

Aristophanes does not take up the search for ways to control and channel eros, for he sees it as something we suffer rather than as something we do. He traces our subjection to the ineluctable power of eros to a primordial affliction which has left us conscious of our essential incompleteness. Eros alone can heal us provided we (who retain responsibility despite the erotic constraint) "honor the gods" in submitting to it. Agathon, by contrast, celebrates an eros which involves neither ambivalence nor compulsion or need, but enjoys and thus gives to us the abundance we lack and does so with unrestrained license. Paradoxically, this license issues in the harmonious order which springs from consistent orientation towards the beautiful.

Socrates finds that the fear with which he anticipated Agathon's discourse (194a, 198a) was fully justified. The young tragedian's speech was, as befitted him, exalted and beautiful (199a), because it ascribed to the god to be praised every beautiful thing and brought to the task resources of imagery, inventiveness and verbal elegance which Gorgias himself could scarcely rival, thus threatening to reduce the plainspoken Socrates to ridicule²⁹ and silence. If one looks beneath this splendid attire, however, one finds that it concealed deformity and that the beauty with which it enticed others was not the inherent beauty of truth. Truth, being of itself luminous, repudiates gaudy artifice. Although Socrates' talk of cobblers and packasses (221e) may provoke ridicule so that he is ranked with Aristophanes as a γελοῖος (213c), it will, on examination, show that the high-flown discourse of tragedians who sway the crowds is really laughable.

Agathon who must briefly submit to the discipline of Socrates' searching conversation is reduced, in his answers, to utter simplicity and brevity and is quickly brought to admit the incoherence of his accomplished speech.

Socrates points out what is deceptively evident and innocuous: eros is always oriented towards something with the ardor of desire and longing. The very possibility of desire implies some deficiency on the part of him who desires, an incompleteness in his own being. In that we desire and remain governed by eros, we lack the freedom of autonomy of self-sufficiency; we are incomplete and cannot hold what we seem to possess (as Aristophanes obscurely perceived) on account of our bondage in time. Attainment does not extinguish desire, because it remains threatened by loss.

Agathon knows well what evokes and entices desire: it is that which is beautiful; for we are drawn to beauty as to the shining countenance of the good, because we are in need of the good. Plato does not, as is commonly supposed, assume or set up a strict equivalence between the beautiful and the good. He says that the good is or appears beautiful (201c), but not the reverse an interpretation compatible with 204e. Hartmut Buchner, in his elucidation of the Greek understanding of "καλόν" and "ἀγαθόν,"³⁰ points out that Hesiod (in verse 585) speaks of a καλόν κακόν --an evil which can only gain a hold among men by the shining loveliness and wondrousness of its coming to presence. Agathon's speech, in fact, exemplifies such an evil. Do not (to recall the divided line) reflections and fleeting images fascinate us by their beauty?

If whatever comes into presence relative to us who are in need does so with a beauty which lures us to pursuit but is dangerous because it may imprison us in a labyrinth of shadows, the need for guided erotic ascent becomes apparent.

Socrates must continue his praise of eros, which consists in making manifest first its intrinsic nature, then its erga, as a remembered dialogue with Diotima. Her teaching, addressed to a younger Socrates who (unlike Agathon) is well aware of his ignorance, takes over at the point at which Agathon could no longer have sustained the dialogue.³¹ This younger Socrates is as yet devoid of dialectical skill: he does "violence" to the natural divisions of a continuum by setting up a radical separation of opposites which allows of no interaction. Having radically divorced them, he appeals, ridiculously enough (202b) to the consensus of one such pair, the wise and the ignorant, to defend the divinity of eros.

Since the gods, as the eudaimones and kaloi, enjoy an unthreatened constancy of access to the good and the beautiful, whereas the life of man is encompassed by death, eros cannot be identified with either of these poles. Its essential nature must be understood as a metaxy and its ergon as mediation which binds the disparate realms of the divine and the mortal into one articulated whole (to be mirrored by dialectic). This whole, unlike the homogenous wholes of Aristophanes, preserves opposition, but is neither disjoint like the cosmos of Pausanias nor lulled into diffuse harmony, like that of Erixymachus. It is unified by the erotic relations of striving and giving and is, presumably, itself oriented toward that beauty by participation in which all else (even the gods) is beautiful (211d-e). and toward that goodness which is the source of all goods.

If the gods themselves are bound into one whole with mortal nature by the bonds of eros, they cannot enjoy absolute self-sufficiency. Their eudaimonia must be sustained by the constancy and ready success of their striving for the good (in that they mount, to use the image of the Phaedrus, the steep ascent to the divine banquet with steadiness and ease). Perhaps their blessedness is also sustained by their creative-giving relation to man. Poros and Penia, indeed, can only be united to engender eros because, although opposites, they are not disparate; for absolute deprivation feels no need, and unfettered abundance has no use for resource. They are united as there arises, among the gods, the personification of enchanting beauty, and with the help of the nectar poured, traditionally, by Aphrodite's attendant, Peitho.

Eros, in its dynamic tension between abundance and deprivation, freedom and bondage, commanding resourcefulness and impotence, displays the enigma of the human condition and the creative power of the human will which contrives to attain its ends, but always over against the implacable self-refusal of the temporality in which being is given to us. Although subject to the bondage of mortality, eros eludes and outwits death by the perpetual self-renewal of life.

The liberating potential of eros, who governs us all, reaches its acme in certain individuals such as Socrates, who is a demonic man. Indeed, the Eros portrayed by Diotima bears the features of Socrates: he is rough, unkempt, and barefoot,³² dwells outside the confines of human habitation, on the roads and under the open sky (cf. the persistent emphasis, in the Phaedrus, on going outside the walls) knows more ruses than

Odysseus, and is an awesome sorcerer, enchanter, and sophist. His life, above all, is an unending quest for wisdom; for wisdom is supremely beautiful and is the door of access to the good.

To show forth the liberating power of eros, the benefits which accrue to us from a quest which must remain ultimately unfulfilled, Diotima must display not only the manifestation of eros and its ontological conditions, but also its teleology.

Eros does not pursue the beautiful in idle fascination, as a crow is enticed by every shining thing, but it does so because it perceives in it the promise of the good. Eros, now explicitly identified with the will (the human will, at first--205b) in all its manifestations, seeks the lasting possession of the good, because the abiding of the good within our assured access constitutes eudaimonia. To contrive the possession of the good which is not allotted to us, eros must seek to overcome, by its resourcefulness, the ontological deficiency of human nature which renders us prey to misguided confusion and compels us to temporal fragmentation, i.e., deprives us of wholeness.

Eudaimonia in the possession of the good is allotted only to the gods who have unimpeded and constant access to reality as it is in itself and whose motion and causality hence must always reflect its perfection. Human nature, on the other hand, is imprisoned among what is dim and fleeting; and its attainments dissolve in its grasp. Yet eros, the liberator, can, by unceasing and well-guided effort, bring some part of the divine portion within human reach. How does eros accomplish this liberation; what is the nature of its effort?

Eros attains the good through unrelenting generation which is steered by and consummated in the beautiful. The beautiful, as the luminous countenance of reality--of that which the gods contemplate and imitate--is akin to the divine nature and harmonious rather than discordant and erratic. Human nature can achieve the good only by expending its creative effort in the shining presence of the beautiful.

Human nature, which is molded by eros, shows forth the mixed parentage of this daimon, in that the power of generation, which is θεῖον τὸ πᾶν (206c) is our divine endowment. The disturbing power of beauty over us is thus not only due, as Socrates taught in the Phaedrus, to the awakening of an obscure memory; in that it lights up our enfettering darkness it makes us simultaneously aware of these fetters and of our power of transcendence, thus spurring us to a frenzy of creative effort.

Beauty is thus the *Μοῖρα οὖν καὶ Εἰλείθυια* (goddess of fate and birth) which rules all coming-to-be, in that the latter, as the work of eros, is rooted in the beautiful presencing as which we encounter physis, yet stands over against it as an effort to conquer the enigmatic self-refusal which pervades its giving. The creative effort of mortal nature whence springs all becoming is thus an unceasing, generative Heraclitean strife between its desire to share in the portion of the gods and the constraints of its origin in and containment by the participated and reflected, remote from ousia ontos ousa.

Diotima now subsumes the human will into the continuum of all nature which spends itself in ceaseless generation and devoted care of the resulting offspring (207b). The eros which issues in generation in accordance with psyche rather than soma is, as it were, a heightening and coming to consciousness of the perpetual self-renewal which provides our physical and psychological continuity (207d-208b).

Having grounded human eros in the striving and suffering of all nature, Diotima must, however, immediately bring out its startling uniqueness. Our eros does not exhaust itself in the perpetuation of our specific being but may, paradoxically, require--or seem to require--the annihilation thereof, as in the case of Alcestis or Achilles, for the sake of a surer promise of lasting access to the good. The manifestations of human eros are not uniform, but exhibit a bewildering and contradictory variety, so that the need for a criterion by which to evaluate and order them becomes apparent at once. Is the creativity of the psyche to be valued above the bodily generation which we share with all living beings, and, if so, does its superior value derive from the fact that it accomplishes undying fame?³³ The complexity of eros cannot be controlled, as Pausanias thought, by nomos, nor yet by techne, as suggested by Erixymachus, for nomos and techne are themselves erotic forms.

Diotima expresses some reservations concerning Socrates' readiness to be initiated into the "higher mysteries" of eros (210a). Her reluctance can hardly be taken to indicate--as has been thought--that we have here come up against the limits of Socrates' thought as distinct from Plato's.³⁴ It reflects the fact that the Socrates whom she is addressing--who is enraptured and quite carried away by the sight of beautiful boys and youths in resplendent attire (211d)--has barely begun the ascent and cannot be expected to understand and value the goal thereof on the basis of mere verbal exposition. Such initiation is difficult to accomplish even when the guide leads the novice by lived experience, as Socrates guided Alcibiades, at a later time.

It is of some interest that a similar allusion to the greater and lesser mysteries occurs at Gorgias, 497b. Socrates there remarks that Callicles is fortunate to have been initiated into the greater mysteries before the lesser; he did not think this was permitted. What Callicles has just learned is that pleasure and pain cannot be identified with good and evil, so that one who remains in bondage to pleasure and pain lacks a clear understanding of the hierarchy of the good. Hence the judges of the dead, as portrayed in the concluding myth, must themselves be naked and dead. Since Callicles, who despises philosophy, has never "practiced dying," he lacks the prerequisites for discerning the good. Diotima, in a quite parallel manner, perceives Socrates' unpreparedness, but also his promise, so that she does attempt the initiation.

What, then, are the stages by which the initiate progresses to the supreme vision? To begin with, he must indeed be captivated by physical beauty and must pursue someone beautiful in body with singleminded passion, awakening in the beloved the sense for the noble and beautiful. Beauty is most apparent and readily accessible in the body; but such beauty connotes the danger of enmeshment in mere images by the ties of pleasure and pain. Upward momentum derives from a progressive renunciation accomplished through an act of the intellect: the lover who realizes that all physical beauty is akin will then love it without possessive passion; for it would be senseless to seek to possess all beautiful bodies. He can now be guided to perceive the superiority of the beauty of mind and soul over bodily beauty, and will, at the same time, no longer strive to enjoy, but to give. In seeking to guide and ennoble those whom he loves, he will become aware of the manifestation of beauty in the life of action. Thus freed from narrow and confining attachments, he will, at last, perceive the pure beauty of the sciences and advance towards the goal of all eros: to bring and retain the good within human reach through generation in abiding beauty. Every stage of vision must, it is clear, inform creative action; for human life is not fulfilled in pure contemplation.

He who has avoided enticement by beauty in its lesser manifestations and has attained the freedom of the "open sea of beauty" which lies before him in all its richness and varied articulation, and who has expended his creative power in an unceasing quest for wisdom, the supremely beautiful, can at last attain to the intellectual vision of that unparticipated beauty whose brightness is not the deceptive and ephemeral play of luminosity that misleads the navigator, but the radiance of truth itself (212a). This light will guide him

to the true goal of eros: the engendering of arete itself, and not its mere image, through the abiding love of and union with truth. Through the birth and development of arete alone, springing from the intellectual vision which compels love, can human life share in the blessedness of the gods.

Lest the accomplishment of this ascent to which Socrates' praise of eros calls his listeners seem an impossible undertaking, we will presently be shown one who has accomplished it: Socrates, not as Diotima knew him, but as he now baffles the young men drawn towards him in confused passion.

Breaking the hushed silence and earnest praise which attended Socrates' speech, the shouts of Alcibiades now resound in the courtyard. As he staggers into the doorway, drunk and supported by a flute girl, yet commanding, we see that his head is adorned with "a thick wreath of ivy and violets" which one can scarcely help associating with Sappho, the "violet-haired" who would not let Dika go bareheaded. (See D, Sa., 149; E. Sa., 119; LP, Sa. 137, and D 80; E, 170; LP, 81, b.) His head is also garlanded with a profusion of ribbons with which he has come to crown "the wisest and most beautiful" of the men of his circle, so as to honor him and publicly proclaim his excellence. His zeal and his judgment may, he concedes, be met with laughter, for in his drunkenness he presents a comic spectacle; but he will speak the strict truth (213a) and thus deliver the promised judgment of Dionysos (175e). Alcibiades is not only intoxicated by wine, but also by the mania and philerastia (213d) which mark his relation to Socrates.

Having crowned Agathon while his sight was obscured, Alcibiades is perturbed and gripped by "envy and jealousy" (emotions appropriate to the comic stage) at the sight of Socrates who, despite his unprepossessing appearance and unpolished speech, cannot be ranked with comedians and clowns, but contrives to share the couch of the kallistos. This baffling Socrates must not only be accorded a share of Agathon's garland, but it is he alone who compels truthful praise.

As Alcibiades bestows his praise, which centers around a memory etched in pain, it becomes evident that it is Socrates who exemplifies the forms of excellence which Agathon had so incongruously attributed to Eros: it is he who is ultimately beautiful, who has access to the souls of men and stirs them to their depths, and it is he, so powerfully attracted to the beautiful, who remains the master of passion and desire and is swayed by neither pleasure nor pain or fear. He is thus the

supreme example of sophrosyne and andreia and is the speaker or "poet" whose discourses are truly godlike. In Socrates, these forms of arete do not spring from license and self-abandon, but from a powerful erotic striving conjoined with intellectual clarity and consistent self-discipline.

Socrates, as the erotic man, manifests the dual origin of eros as a tension between the "comic" and the "tragic." Through his example we perceive the pervasive interpenetration of the two throughout the fabric of human life, so that the dramatist possessed of techne must create comedy as well as tragedy (223d). An eikon of Socrates is laughable rather than, at first sight, inspiring: he resembles a crouching silene or satyr who hides within divine images of incomparable beauty. Like these goatish³⁵ characters, Socrates is a master of Dionysian music³⁶ which reveals "those who stand in need of the gods or of initiation" (215c).

The "music" of his teaching is not (pace Eriymachus) harmonious, pleasurable, and soothing, but brings his listeners to tears and leaves them shaken, in conflict and utter perplexity (216c), since it awakens shame and requires a conversion involving one's whole being (216a) which can only be accomplished in violent struggle.

Alcibiades proved unequal to this battle and unprepared for it, for he had expected teaching to be a matter of giving and receiving, like Agathon's transfer by wick. Overcome by the beauty of the divine images hidden beneath Socrates' ironic playfulness, he hoped to receive access to it in exchange for his erotic compliance, given that he had great physical beauty. He thus began to pursue Socrates, his supposed lover, as though he were the beloved, for he himself had been bitten by the "viper" of philosophy "into the heart, namely, or the soul, or whatever you want to call it" (218a) and, maddened by the pain, mistook Socrates for the true object of his love, instead of seeing him as the mediator and guide. In his lack of self-discipline, Alcibiades balked at performing the labor of ascent; he starkly exemplifies the perversion of erotic momentum through fixation on the love of demos, on honor and fame as a shortcut to eudaimonia. Unable either to renounce his love for the beauty Socrates represents or to bear the shame which he feels in his presence, Alcibiades has fled from him without being able to escape his own torment.

Alcibiades' speech provokes general laughter, for, indeed, it has all the makings of a "satyr- and silene-

drama:" the beloved, in a comic reversal, pursues the supposed lover, is rejected, and now, in jealousy, warns another whom the lover seems to be successfully seducing. Yet it was Agathon's speech which was really ludicrous, whereas Alcibiades spoke with personal urgency, poignancy, and truth. Unlike Alcibiades' other love, the Athenian demos, Socrates will not flatter him but humble him to the last (222e). Once the drunken confusion of nocturnal revelries invades the banquet, however, we do not glimpse Socrates seducing Agathon, but drinking with him and Aristophanes, still passing the cup from left to right, and arguing for the congruence of the tragedian's and the comedian's art, until, at last, after even Agathon has fallen asleep, he walks off to pass the day as usual.

Having entered into the texts by close, meditative reading and performed the foregoing analysis, we are now in a position to indicate some comparisons and conclusions which the reader may further develop.

The Symposium, as compared to the Phaedrus, places striking emphasis on the necessary non-fulfillment of eros which spurs us, who are at the apex of a natural continuum, to ceaseless creativity. Therein lies the daring of a proper (i.e., truthful) praise of eros: though eros is our greatest benefactor, eros is not a god, but an ever-renewed need rooted in the duality of our nature.

In the Phaedrus, eros has a delimited sphere of operation and a specific task to accomplish: it is confined to man, for divine psyche, being perfect, harmonious, and fully winged has no need of liberation, whereas psyche on the level of animal nature appears to be beyond its awakening reach. Eros imparts upward momentum to the fallen, incarnate human soul by awakening anamnesis.³⁷ The path of anamnesis towards liberation leads through aporia consequent upon the disturbing encounter with beauty in another person which calls forth powerful and conflicting responses. There is, however, no persistent negativity within the manifestations of beauty itself leading to articulated gradations, such as we encounter in the Symposium; eros must overcome only a single form of ambivalence or negativity (that of "left-handed" mania) to accomplish liberation. The creativity of eros, in the Phaedrus, expends itself in the lovers' striving to perfect the divine image they recognize in one another. The reward of their dedication, if they have succeeded in taming the powerful "dark horse" and subjugating it to a "charioteer" whose aim is to regain the vision of reality, will be liberation from the bonds of mortality and the renewed

contemplation of reality itself. Their eros thus is not reflected in action or teaching within a social context, except insofar as, psyche being the arche of all motion, their attainment of a vision of reality itself will eventually render them causes of harmonious and perfect motion. Eros, however, being essentially a motive power, requires to be conjoined with and guided by the true art of speaking, which springs from the same source and involves a parallel overcoming of ambivalence.

The Symposium brings human powers and realms of being which, in the Phaedrus, remained disjoint, into coherence and articulated unity. Eros here is not restricted to man's interpersonal relations but encompasses (as Erixyachus first perceived) physis and techné and mediates between the human and the divine. It cannot fully transcend the bondage we share with all nature: the condition of mortality or existence in time which threatens any grasp of the good we may attain by its encompassing negativity. What measure of transcendence eros achieves is due to its resourcefulness and unceasing creative effort by which it can bring the eternal and perfect within the fragmentation of time. The path to such accomplishment is one of acknowledging negativity and of renunciation, in that all manifestations of beauty must successively be loved and traversed, and the creativity appropriate to each expended and renounced, before the initiate, who is thus shown the path to avoid either forfeiture or despair, can attain to the intellectual vision of beauty itself. That contemplation, however, is not self-sufficient for us who remain enmeshed in the temporality which pervades physis but is, as it were, the erotic union which enables us to engender realities and not shadows in bringing about the arete which constitutes our only access to the good. There is no longer a need to conjoin eros with rhetoric, for eros is not restricted to the interpersonal "erotic" domain but comprises all the manifestations of the human will and orders them in accordance with their subservience to our guiding aim to achieve, through arete, lasting access to the good within the constraint of our ontological condition. Thus the Symposium, in indicating the depths in which an understanding of the nature and acquisition of arete must be sought, shows why the Meno had to remain aporetic.

The Symposium achieves a scope and coherence of vision transcending that of the Phaedrus. Although this vision, given its unflinching acknowledgment of negativity, is essentially tragic, it casts the light of comedy on the somewhat goatish, if absorbing erotic pre-occupations of life.

NOTES

¹The following texts have been consulted. For the Phaedrus, the Helmbold/Rabinowitz translation and the Greek text in I. Bekker, ed., Platonis Scripta Graece Omnia (London: Priestley, 1826), Vol. I. English language quotations are taken from the Helmbold/Rabinowitz translation. For the Symposium, I have consulted the French translation, with facing Greek text, by Léon Robin in Platon: Oeuvres Complètes (Paris: "Les Belles Lettres", 1929), Vol. IV, but have relied most heavily on the German translation, with facing Greek text, by Otto Apelt in Otto Apelt and Annemarie Capelle, Platon: das Gastmahl (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1960). English language quotations are ad hoc translations.

²For a general summary of the question, with bibliographical references, see G. J. de Vries, A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1969), pp. 7-11. John D. Moore argues for the priority of the Phaedrus in his article "The Relation between Plato's Symposium and Phaedrus," in J. M. E. Moravcsik, ed., Patterns in Plato's Thought (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel, 1923), pp. 52-71.

³Cf. Paul Friedländer, Plato: an Introduction, trans. Hans Meyerhoff ("The Bollingen Library:" New York: Harper and Row, 1958), chap. ii.

⁴Kenneth Dorter, in his "Imagery and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus" (Journal of the History of Philosophy, IX, 1971, pp. 279-88) discusses the nature symbolism he perceives in the dialogue.

⁵This point, familiar from other Platonic dialogues (e.g., Meno 77c, ff.), is not explicitly stated here but appears to be presupposed. It is, of course, crucial to the Symposium.

⁶This ties in with the etymological linking of mantic and mania in 244c and is also reminiscent of the Meno (92c), where Socrates calls Anytus a diviner--providing an ironic parallel to the statesman who practices arete by inspiration but cannot give an account of it.

⁷ Friedländer, in his Platon: die platonischen Schriften (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960), Vol. III, pp. 201-202, calls attention to the parallel here to Phaedrus' role in the Symposium as the "father of discourse" and to the note of solemnity struck by the mention of Simmias. De Vries (p. 105) thinks that Friedländer overstresses the import of this reference. In any case, Plato now drops the ironic playfulness which characterized his earlier use of religious language (which is still echoed by Phaedrus' lukewarm assent to the suggestion that eros is "something divine") and speaks of impiety, atonement, purification, etc. in all seriousness.

⁸ The emphasis on its being the hour of noon recalls the analogy of the sun in Republic VI, 508.

⁹ "You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you travelled by every path in order to do so; such is the depth of its meaning" (logos), Heraclitus, Fr. 45 (Wheelwright translation).

¹⁰ I cannot agree with Raphael Demos's contention, in his "Plato's Doctrine of the Psyche as a Self-Moving Motion" (Journal of the History of Philosophy, VI, 1968, pp. 133-145), that soul is morally neutral and governed by neither purpose nor necessity (whereas eros is goal-directed). Strife is not neutral balance; and what moves without purpose does not require the guidance of a "charioteer."

¹¹ The link between circular, autonomous motion and adherence to reality itself is elucidated by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his "Vorgestalten der Reflexion," in Kleine Schriften, III (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972). He writes: "Das grosse Vorbild der in sich zurücklaufenden Bahnen der Gestirne und des sich im Kreislauf von Werden und Vergehen beständig erneuernden Naturlaufs spannt die brüchige Existenz des Menschen auf ihre Möglichkeit hin, in der geistigen Erfassung des Wahren am Immerseienden Teil zu gewinnen" (p. 4), and again, "Und immer geht die Bewegung und die Erkenntnis in einander über, die Bewegung des In-sich-selbst-Kreisens und das Denken des immer Selbigen" (p. 11).

It may be tempting to see in Plato's reference to the colorless, formless, intangible reality itself which is beyond the heavens and sustains the autonomous motive power of psyche an approximation of the ontological difference. This would be misleading, however, since, for Plato, reality itself is determinate and intelligible. Friedländer comes to a similar conclusion in differentiating Plato from the mystics in ch. iii, "Beyond Being,"

of his Plato: an Introduction. A vaguer discussion of this perspective (without reference to either mysticism or the ontological difference) may be found in H. L. Sinaiko, Love, Knowledge, and Discourse (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 68 ff., and pp. 114-17. Sinaiko sees the problem of the arrheton versus the logoi as the problem of the one and many.

¹²The motive of the unbidden or impoverished participant in a banquet recurs in the Symposium, where we find Aristodemus discussing the propriety of going to the feast as the unofficial guest of Socrates, and Penia begging at the banquet of the gods.

¹³Cf. 254b. Friedländer, in ch. ii "Demon and Eros" of Plato, an Introduction, makes the point that daimonion and eros, though opposed as the inhibiting and the driving force, are fundamentally akin.

¹⁴Thus Alcibiades, in the Symposium, confesses that he treated Socrates like his beloved, although he seemed to be, in a sense, his lover (217c).

¹⁵Cf. Gorgias, 503-b. Callicles, of course, mistakes "liberty and license" coupled with unscrupulous cunning for freedom and strength.

¹⁶Cf. Gorgias, 456d-457a, where Gorgias seeks to claim moral neutrality for his skill. Socrates points out, later in the dialogue, that the generative effort of one's eros will bring about what is akin to the object of one's love (481d-482b). Since human endeavor thus reflects a person's orientation and re-enforces such orientation by its results, there are no neutral endeavors.

¹⁷This understanding of the techne of rhetoric in terms of diairesis is not yet attained in the Gorgias. In that dialogue, Socrates denies that rhetoric is a techne on the grounds that it is an imitation, by flattery, of a genuine techne, legislation (465c-d).

¹⁸The image, of course, harkens back to the image of the great leader, Zeus, guiding the host of gods and spirits in their ascent to the top of the vault of heaven whence they can see reality, which lies without (247a).

¹⁹For notes on the significance of this term here and for its connotations, see de Vries, pp. 218-20.

²⁰For a perceptive study of the significance of this communality of friendship which underlies the blurring of

the distinction between lover and beloved (cf. note 15, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Logos und Ergon im platonischen 'Lysis,'" pp. 51-63.

²¹Friedländer, in Platon, Vol. III (pp. 1-2), asks why Plato should have interposed such a marked temporal distance between the event and the narration and emphasized it by stylistic means. He observes that a similar construction is found in the Parmenides where, likewise, a long period of gestation allowed something received in the past to come to fruition. Furthermore, the temporal distance, by eliminating the irrelevant, accomplishes a transposition of the actual event to the level of symbol, an immersion of the atemporal in human temporality. Again, Friedländer observes, the gaiety of the feast becomes co-mingled, by the use of two temporal foci, with the consciousness of Alcibiades' betrayal and the impending death of Socrates.

²²As to the awareness of need, see 173a, c-e, and the exchange between Socrates and Aristodemus about the propriety of the latter's coming to the feast uninvited and without having like Socrates, made himself "beautiful" (174a-d). As to madness, we will leave aside the question whether the reading of 173d, should be $\mu\alpha\nu\iota\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$ or $\mu\alpha\lambda\alpha\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$. Robin accepts the latter reading with its link to the Phaedo, whereas Apelt and Capelle side with the majority of translators in accepting the former. The numerous other references to madness in the dialogue are listed by Moore, p. 55.

²³Friedländer, in Platon, Vol. III (pp. 5-6) points out that Socrates is characterized in the Symposium as "der gesellige und der einsame Mensch" and that this polarity between solitude and gregariousness characterizes the human condition but is more powerfully manifested in Socrates.

²⁴The lover is $\epsilon\nu\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ whereas the beloved is without such inspiration but will, presumably, when he responds to his lover, love the divine manifestation in him instead of seeking external reward. See also notes 15 and 20.

²⁵Robin (note to 180d) thinks this doctrine is "à peu près l'idée stoïcienne" which treats all actions as matter requiring the determination of form. Apelt (p. 149, note 3) does more justice to Plato's frame of reference by pointing out that it is "die sophistische Lehre, wie sie vor allem von Protagoras vertreten wurde."

²⁶Plato, ironically, has him conclude with an apology for the "improvised" character of his speech, Whereafter Aristodemus continues: παυσανίου δὲ παυσάμενου διδάσκουσα γὰρ με ἴσα λέγειν οὐτωςὶ οἱ σοφοί (185c).

²⁷Compare Gorgias, 481d-82c. Socrates likens Agathon to Gorgias himself at Symp., 198c.

²⁸Agathon--in the interest of speaking well rather than out of conviction, espouses here a position close to that of Callicles in the Gorgias. The latter could not see how a man can be happy "when he is a slave to anybody at all" and thus denies that self-control is conducive to happiness. He holds that the "naturally noble and just" man is he who nurtures all his appetites and skillfully caters to them. "Luxury, intemperance, and license," when given sufficient backing, are, to him, arete and eudaimonia (494c).

²⁹The theme of the interpenetration of the tragic and the comic now begins to come into play. For a perceptive study thereof, see Diskin Clay, "The Tragic and Comic Poet of the Symposium," delivered at a meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, December, 1974.

³⁰Hartmut Buchner, Eros und Sein (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1965), pp. 46-54.

³¹To ask whether eros is ugly and base would have strictly contradicted his speech of praise; and the denial of the divinity of eros would have destroyed its whole frame of reference. Buchner emphasizes the radical nature of this Fragestellung which goes counter to "jahrhundertelanger griechischer Tradition" (p. 70).

³²The striking resemblance of Mörrike's portrayal of Liebe in his poem Peregrina to Diotima's eros is noted by Apelt. Morike writes: ". . . Die Liebe, sagt man, steht am Pfahl gebunden, Geht endlich arm, zerrüttet, unbeschuh't; Dies edle Haupt hat nicht mehr, wo es ruht, Mit Tränen netzet sie der Füße Wunden"

³³Harry Neumann, in his "Diotima's Concept of Love" (American Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 86, 1965, pp. 33-59), holds that Diotima's eros strives for individual immortality through undying glory achieved by bringing to birth one's own particular spiritual children. Such birth, he holds, requires that the lover take advantage of some beautiful "beloved." He interprets the myth of Poros and Penia as an illustration of this "sophistical attempt to win eternal glory by deceiving others" (p. 53), alluding here to Diotima's sophistical tone at 208c (where she is discussing an illusion of immortality

in the context of the lesser mysteries). Neumann, in conclusion, contrasts Socrates' refusal to "use the souls of others to obtain glory" and his midwifery (quite compatible with our interpretation) with Diotima's lust for fame. Although Neumann correctly perceives the non-identity of the good and beauty in the Symposium (pp. 37-39), he otherwise drastically misreads the dialogue, despite an impressive array of scholarly references. He ignores Socrates' explicit statement that he has been utterly convinced by Diotima and now seeks to impart his persuasion to others (212b).

³⁴ Among others, by F. M. Cornford in "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium, in The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays (Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1950), reprinted in Gregory Vlastos, ed., Plato: a Collection of Critical Essays (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1971), pp. 119-31. Buchner (p. 57), sees no "Wesensunterschied in der Transzendenz der Idee des Schönen selbst" in the Symposium compared to earlier dialogues. This is certainly correct; cf., for example, Republic, 476b-d and 490b. Buchner, however, still takes Diotima's remark as a differentiation between Plato and Socrates, in that Socrates remains "in der Aporie des Fragens nach dem Sein des Seienden," whereas Plato answers by his "Ideenlehre." He remarks: "Es könnte sein, dass dieses Ausharren in der Aporie des Fragens aus einem Tiefenblick kommt, der die Idee, selbst die Idee, nicht als die hinreichende Antwort auf das im Verborgenen Erfragte annehmen kann." This interpretation is interesting but does not explain Diotima's doubt about the right timing of her discourse (if one follows the Apelt translation of 210a), and the contrast between the Socrates of Diotima's and the Socrates of Alcibiades' acquaintance.

³⁵ The etymological connection between tragedy and goats, in Greek, is discussed by Clay, pp. 9-10. Clay distinguishes two views on the nature of tragedy in the Platonic dialogues and illustrates one by the disquisition on the name of Pan at Cratylus, 408c. The Cratylus passage also illuminates the invocation of Pan which concludes the Phaedrus, in that Pan stands for the encompassing and ambivalent power of language, for the duality of eros, and for the intermediate condition not only of man, who lives by language, but of all nature as governed by eros.

³⁶ Consult Apelt's note concerning the relationships between silenes, satyrs, Marsyas, Apollo, and Dionysos, p. 151 (note 77).

³⁷For a study of anamnesis in the Phaedrus and in other dialogues, see Carlos E. Huber, S. J., Anamnesis bei Platon (Munich: Max Hueber, 1964).