Plato's Philosopher-Lovers and the Ladder to the Forms: the roles of *eros* and beauty in Platonic epistemology

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Abstract

This thesis examines the way in which the connection between *eros* and beauty informs the epistemological progression in Platonic philosophy, such that the particular experience of beauty works as a trigger for critical inquiry. This analysis focuses on the way *eros* for beauty is able to drive the philosophical movement towards knowledge, so that philosophical education becomes available via the experience of *eros* or love for what is beautiful. As follows, the advancement of Platonic epistemology with its ultimate end in the transcendent is brought back to the sensible and grounded in exclusive particularity as the basis of this move towards universality. This claim is based on the analysis of epistemology and metaphysics expounded in Plato's *Symposium*, and to a lesser extent in the *Phaedrus.*

In Chapter 2 we begin with an examination of *eros* as a crucial element for the philosophical endeavor. In the *Symposium eros* is shown to be a powerful aspect of human nature that strives for communion with what is transcendent. This inquiry sheds light on aspects of how and why individuals seek knowledge to show why *eros* is the activity of the soul that motivates the pursuit of wisdom. This analysis emphasizes that the movement of the lover, from love of particular beauty to *noesis* of the Beautiful, is a philosophical movement at its core, as the lover follows the same epistemological progression as the philosopher. Chapter 3 examines why *eros* of beauty works so effectively to provoke critical inquiry through an examination of beauty's cognitive advantage due to its perceptual availability. The appreciation of beauty is shown as having the capacity to provoke the aporetic state necessary for the practice of philosophy. The final chapter analyzes the possible dangers of using beauty as a pedagogical tool through an examination of Socrates and Alcibiades' relationship; in addition, we examine how beauty can aid in healing the limitations of philosophy in terms of reaching its audience.

The entire examination shows how the particular experience of beauty is able to ground philosophical education through sensible experience that makes accessible the metaphysical goal. The aesthetic experience of the lover in his relationship to the object of love provides an accessible praxis that allows the individual to become a philosopher of sorts, embarking on the same journey as he who desires wisdom. In this fashion, Diotima's description of the journey of the lover provides a philosophical approach to living and learning grounded in the practical and in an attainable experience for all: that of *eros* for what is beautiful and immediate.

Table of Contents

Abstract 2

Chapter 1 Introduction & Overview 5

Chapter 2 *Eros* 18

2.1 Introduction: What is *eros*? 18

2.2 From the danger of the particular to the harmony of the universal: the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus 20

2.3 The ladder to completion: the speeches of Aristophanes, Agathon, and Socrates 42

2.4 *Eros* incarnate: the entrance of Alcibiades 66

2.5 *Eros*, the remedy for *aporia* and the human condition 69

2.6 The lover *qua* philosopher: the Beautiful and the Good as objects of Love 74

Chapter 3 Beauty 83

3.1 Introduction: beauty and the ladder to the Forms 83

3.2 Beauty's star: what makes the Beautiful different from the other Platonic Forms and what this means for Platonic philosophy 86

3.3 Beauty's cognitive priority 105

3.4 Beauty's call to transcendence: how does the beautiful provoke critical inquiry? 110

Chapter 4 Philosophy made *kalos* 116

4.1 Introduction: *eros*, beauty, and philosophical education 116

4.2 The dangerous side of sensible beauty: Alcibiades' failed philosophical conversion 120

4.3 Giving birth in beauty: Plato and Dante 136

4.4 Proper philosophical writing according to Plato: beauty and truth combined 147

Chapter 5 Conclusion 154

Chapter 1 Introduction & Overview

This thesis examines the way in which the connection between *eros* and beauty instigates the epistemological progression in Platonic philosophy, so that the particular experience of beauty works as a trigger for critical inquiry. This analysis focuses on the way *eros* (romantic love and/or erotic desire) for beauty is able to drive the philosophical movement from ignorance towards knowledge so that philosophical education becomes available to all individuals via the common experience of *eros* for what is beautiful. In other words, philosophy becomes possible through the experience of love. In this manner, the progression of Platonic epistemology with its ultimate end in the metaphysical is brought back to the sensible and grounded in particularity as the basis of this move towards universality. This claim is based on the analysis of epistemology and metaphysics expounded in Plato's *Symposium*, and to a lesser extent in the *Phaedrus.* Both dialogues show that the journey towards transcendence is described in terms of love of the beautiful, and the relationship between *eros* and particular beauty is viewed as essential to the progression towards greater understanding.

There are many misconceptions and prejudices in the philosophical connotation of the appreciation of beauty. In many cases, love is condemned as not having a role in education, an area where the 'emotional' aspect of learning is increasingly censored in favour of a stark rational approach. Philosophy suffers, in grand part, from the same censorship and glorification of rationality, whereby the rational aspect of our nature is seen as more suited for intellectual advancements than are the more 'embodied' aspects of our being, such as our *eros* or physical contingencies. In many cases, such as Kant's deontological account of morality, rationality is viewed as endowing human beings with the tools for intellectual equality; insofar as all individuals partake in reason, all are able to pursue questions of morality and epistemology, for

example, in the same manner. The superiority of reason over other human faculties stems from its supposed ability to produce objective laws that do not take into account subjectivity. Subjectivity, on the other hand, is strictly associated with *eros* and the particular desires of the individual. As a result, *eros* is traditionally shunned from educational endeavours, as it is regarded as producing distraction rather than focus on the goals of learning. Knowledge thus becomes a metaphysical goal that is meant to be pursued away from the physical.

An example of the empowerment of intellectual faculties over those of the body is given in Plato's *Phaedo.* In the *Phaedo,* Plato presents a dualistic ontological account which sets up the body as a detrimental and opposing entity that inhibits the soul's intellectual pursuits. In the *Phaedo* Socrates depicts philosophy as the practice for death; that is, Socrates emphasizes to his interlocutors that philosophy is an activity *of* the soul and for this reason can only be fully carried out once the soul leaves its physical confines, i.e, at the moment the individual dies and the soul is released from the body. The dualistic position whereby the body stands in opposition to the soul can be traced back to Pythagoras and the ideas he adopted from Orphism; according to Arthur Hilary Armstrong, Pythagoreanism adopted the Orphic doctrine that "the soul is divine and immortal, that it has fallen and is imprisoned in the body, and that it is doomed to continual reincarnation until it can purify itself, escape, and return to the divine world" (7). Scholars such as Giovanni Reale and Roxana Carone argue that Plato is influenced by this Pythagorean view when he sets up the opposition of soul and body whereby the soul is associated to intellectual endeavours, and the body to the physical contingencies that prevent the former from occurring. As Reale puts it: "in the conception of the relations between *soul* and *body* there is introduced, beyond the metaphysical-ontological dimension, the religious dimension of Orphism, which transforms the structural distinction between the soul (=supersensible) and body (=sensible) into

a *structural opposition*" (157). Accordingly, the soul and body are given opposing dimensions so that the body, belonging to the 'lower' sphere, prevents the soul from achieving any transcendence.

In the *Phaedo* the body is thus largely portrayed as a "kind of prison" (*Phaedo* 62b) for the soul, a confinement that does not allow the soul to explore fully its transcendent potential, but rather limits the soul to earthly philosophical exploration which in turn is no exploration at all, as true knowledge can only be found away from the physical. The corporeal is deemed as an obstruction; the body stands as an obstacle for the soul to achieve transcendental vision. Philosophy becomes "the practice for dying and death" (*Phaedo* 64a) because it teaches the individual to disdain the activity of the body in favour of the intellectual activity of the soul. The soul-body opposition sets up matter and the physical as evil and inherently unphilosophical, whereas the soul belongs to the divine sphere where true philosophy takes place, away from flux and change. As Thomas Olshewsky explains, in the *Phaedo* the soul is equivalent to intellect itself: "the soul is so closely identified with intellection that this latter term (*dianoia*) is sometimes substituted for the former" (392). Philosophy, or any sort of quest for understanding, can thereby only be pursued in the sphere wherein the soul exists, so that the physical experience of the body does not contaminate the soul and obscure its vision. Socrates' second voyage is thus prompted by this problem: knowledge can only be attained in the metaphysical realm, thus the philosophical endeavour carried out in this domain. As Reale explains, Plato teaches that "the method of the Naturalists based on the senses does not clarify, but obscures knowledge; the new kind of method, therefore, will be based on *logoi* (definitions), and by means of them it must attempt to grasp the truth of things" (40).

In this manner the body can be prevented from dragging the soul towards that which is in flux, intoxicating the soul and making it feel dizzy (*Phaedo* 79c). The further the soul is away from transcendence, the more it suffers; the body forces the soul to participate in that which is in constant change, thus rendering the soul unable to learn. When the soul investigates on its own, conversely, "it passes into the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging" (*Phaedo* 80a). Thus, philosophy's job is described as the turning "away from the body towards the soul" (*Phaedo* 64e), so that the body no longer impedes the attainment of knowledge with its physical desires. The body, being affected by earthly contingencies and desires contributes "to his own incarceration most of all" (*Phaedo* 82e), so that the individual is encouraged to leave behind desire in favour of intellectual activity. The philosopher is thereby the individual who favours spiritual and intellectual activity over physical activity of any kind, as the physical only works to get in the way of what the soul can achieve on its own: "the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flees from it and seeks to be by itself" (*Phaedo* 65d). The soul thus becomes the source of reality; the spiritual realm becomes the domain where true knowledge can be found, and for this to occur the educational journey must be approached with intellect alone. This rejection of our natural fate, of our embodied existence, and the assumption that the physical stands in the way of knowledge is what drives Socrates' second voyage, taking philosophical activity from the physical and into the metaphysical domain.

However, the conception of reason as the sole aspect of our nature that points toward what is 'real' foregoes entirely our embodied identity, which is the primary way in which we come into contact with anything that surrounds us. If we solely analyze the *Phaedo* as Plato's position on the body we are left with a negative account that is highly unsatisfying for us as primarily embodied beings; the *Phaedo*'s elevation of philosophy to the purely intellectual

domain effectively renders it an unreachable activity for human beings: we cannot practice philosophy, we cannot *know*, until we die. However, dialogues such as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* offer a complementary position wherein the philosophical journey is rooted in the practical, in the world, as a means to achieve any knowledge of what is transcendent. As Roxana Carone explains, observation of the late dialogues reveals that the *Phaedo* does not present Plato's entire position on the soul-body relationship, as the later dialogues "reveal an intriguingly close association between the mind and the body" (230). In the *Symposium* the voyage does not have to wait until death; philosophy and the Good can be found in the world as gateways to the Forms Themselves. In these accounts, the practice of worldly affairs does not turn the individual away from philosophy but is rather a necessary stepping stone for philosophical activity. In the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* this worldly activity is love or *eros* for the beauty in others, an experience which acts as a mediator between two spheres that have been structurally opposed: "In the *Symposium*, Plato attempts to show how there can be a mediation of the division between humanity and divinity through *Eros*" (House 46).

In this manner one aspect of our nature is not radically opposed to the other. The glorification of rationality ignores the fact that just like all human beings have subjective desires unlike those of other individuals, all human beings have different levels of cognitive ability and therefore reason in different ways and at different levels. In fact, it seems less likely for individuals to pursue abstract and intelligible ideas that they cannot really grasp than to investigate empirical concepts that are physically manifest. Plato's *Symposium* provides an account that does exactly this: it presents a philosophical journey that does not begin in abstract universality, but rather on the individual as the stepping stone for philosophy, through the idea

that all individuals are lovers of the beauty present in the physical world, and via this desire, they can access any metaphysical knowledge.

The argument of this thesis begins in Chapter 2 with an examination of *eros* and the qualities that make it a crucial element for the philosophical endeavor. Through an analysis of the speeches in the *Symposium eros* is shown to be a powerful aspect of human nature that strives for communion with what is transcendent. In the dialogue the definition of *eros* progresses in each encomium until it reaches an all-encompassing definition in Diotima's speech. *Eros* is presented as the element within us that allows for the bridging of the gap between the divine and the mortal, ever so slightly. As a force that begins in the particular experience of love between human beings it is a devotion that is at first solely present in the finite realm but eventually is geared towards transcendence. Its *daimonic* qualities allow it to bring human beings closer to the transcendence they desire, eventually representing more than just the linear relationship of desire between two individuals, but also the relationship between the self and the transcendental. The dialogical progression of *eros* foreshadows the progression that the lover goes through in the ladder of love; Diotima's speech ultimately takes up important elements from each speech to sublate them into a Platonic account of *eros* that longs after the Beautiful. Thus, from the immediate particularity of Phaedrus' account we are taken to an understanding of *eros* as the capacity present in all individuals that allows us to bridge the gap between the physical and the metaphysical: *eros* prompts us to move out of our state of fluctuation and lack of tangible knowledge and be able to glimpse somewhat that which transcends our nature.

In Phaedrus' eulogy we begin with an understanding that love occurs between particulars. This foundational aspect is taken by Diotima as the first step of the journey towards the Forms. Phaedrus examines love in relationship to shame and virtue, stating that it is the *eros* for one's

beloved that prompts the individual to act in a virtuous manner. However, even though Phaedrus brings forth the idea of virtue he demonstrates that in his account lovers are allowed to commit even unvirtuous acts and display excessive behaviours that can jeopardize the individual and his community. The danger of love that is present in this encomium is later acted out by Alcibiades, whose speech dwells on the extreme feelings that Socrates makes him feel and the lengths he has gone to in order to impress Socrates. In the next panegyric, that of Pausanias, beauty is introduced, and now *eros* is seen as an experience that is associated with the Beautiful. Pausanias' hierarchy of desire matches his insistence for subjecting *eros* to specific laws, which acknowledges beauty's ability to push reason out of the equation in matters of love. Once again, this danger manifests in Alcibiades' performance and his somewhat irrational fixation on Socrates, whom he sees as the starting point and end of his philosophical education. Perhaps this is why Eryximachus focuses on the idea of moderation and harmony, but not instituted by the city like Pausanias' biased law, but rather by nature, or by a caretaker of the soul who knows how to treat it to achieve proper balance. For Eryximachus, this expert of the body is the physician, but for Plato, it will be the philosopher, the image of Socrates as the midwife to the soul.

Balance is needed for *eros* in order that desire not lead the individual into extreme behaviours. This need for balance is a consequence of our ontological status, as delineated by Aristophanes. Human beings are incomplete by nature, and it is this completion that they seek when they desire other individuals. The awareness of our lack is crucial to remediate our nature; this awareness is the state of *aporia* whereby the recognition of ignorance is achieved, which marks the beginning of philosophical inquiry. Aristophanes' account marks a serious impediment for philosophy for Plato, since it limits individual *eros* to other individuals and away from their

previous curiosity concerning the divine. Diotima remedies this horizontal fixation moving the object of love from the temporal to the transcendent, but still incorporating our initial desire for a particular other. This new ultimate object of desire will be the Beautiful, which incorporates the particular account of beauty into its universal nature. The Beautiful is precisely what Agathon mistakes to be *eros* itself, when in reality nothing that belongs to our nature could possess that absolute quality that the Beautiful has as a Form, and *eros* is in reality the principle within us that desires this communion with transcendence. In this manner Diotima conveys an epistemological account whereby the movement towards knowledge begins in the individual experience of love, an experience that at first might appear to be incompatible with education, but that in reality appeals to human *eros* in the most appropriate way. It is precisely the devotion to a particular manifestation of beauty that allows the self to move forward, as *eros* for action becomes triggered and through the understanding of particular beauty we are able to be led into universalization. From this experience the lover is able to recognize that particular beauty is a manifestation of a transcendental Form, which allows her to begin the epistemological movement that is also present in the line analogy in the *Republic*, thus bringing together lover and philosopher under the same progression. Once this understanding is achieved, the lover now has what is required to create beauty in the world, that is, a *noesis* of the form of the Beautiful, so that now she is able to create beauty that has truth and lures the soul with glimpses of what is beautiful, just like Socrates' silenic statues lured Alcibiades into being 'bitten' by philosophy.

Having understood how this progression works, we are now able to compare the lover in Diotima's story to the Platonic philosopher. Both lover and philosopher embark on the same journey, from the sensible to the metaphysical, and both understand that the sensible participates in what is transcendent in such a way that we are able to incorporate the sensible experience on

our journey upwards. The philosopher in Diotima's account is seen as the ultimate lover, having the noblest object of love in that which never changes but always remains the same, thus providing the most stable knowledge. In addition, it is the philosopher who masters the art of *ta erotika* and who knows how to make this progression properly, as we see by the fact that Socrates is the one relaying this information in the banquet. The lover is thus a philosopher of sorts, as both have the same object of their love ultimately in the metaphysical. Moreover, both journeys end not in the metaphysical, but rather in the understanding that achieving knowledge acts as the starting place for philosophical action and creation. That is, the end of philosophical education is not in the clouds, but rather, in the cave.

Moreover, the intermediary aspect of *eros* allows it to act as the remedy to human ignorance, that is, our natural position as creatures in a state of becoming that lack knowledge of what is transcendent. This treatment of *eros* demonstrates three foundational aspects of how, and why, individuals learn and seek knowledge. First, critical inquiry begins in the discovery of what is immediate; for human beings, the most immediate experience is shown in their relationship to one another. Second, by virtue of our nature as incarnate creatures, human beings naturally lack that which is transcendent, and it is part of our nature to recognize this lack and seek to heal it. Third, *eros* by nature loves beauty, since it desires what it lacks the most, and therefore, individuals are naturally attracted to what is beautiful. *Eros* is thus the element in the soul that recognizes that which the soul lacks: in this case, beauty, and via its attraction to particular experiences of beauty *eros* is able to lead the soul forward into an epistemological, and ontological, progression to universality. Diotima's lover becomes Socrates' philosopher, as they both follow the same movement towards the Forms, only the latter via desire for wisdom exclusively, and the former via *eros* for what is *kalos*, beginning in particularity and eventually

being lead to the same revelation as that received by the philosopher. The beginning in the particular experience of love is what humanizes the philosophical movement towards knowledge, grounding it in a kind of *eros* that is common to all human beings: that of the beauty of temporal objects and beings.

The discussion on *eros* segues into the examination of beauty in Chapter 3, which focuses on beauty's power to wake up this strong desire within the individual, especially next to traditional 'philosophical' forms such as the Good or virtue. Beauty becomes a powerful pedagogical tool for philosophical investigation when its power to seduce and command the soul becomes clear for philosophical inquiry. As the most poignant sensible manifestation of the metaphysical, beauty becomes the most immediate reminder of the transcendent abstract goal that are the Forms. Beauty is different from other Forms due to its sensible priority; the way we access beauty is non-discursive and immediate, rationalization is not required and the experience in itself speaks to our *eros* in an immediate and demanding manner. Beauty is the Form that has more accessible and immediate representations in the empirical realm; unlike virtue or justice, for instance, that are abstract concepts with limited physical manifestations, beauty is more easily placed in a particular context so that we are able to see it immediately and concretely. Beauty's accessibility is precisely what makes it ideal for philosophy, as is shown in the *Symposium* wherein it stands at the starting point for Platonic epistemology. It is not that the other Forms partake in the sensible in a lesser degree than beauty, but rather that the particular representations of the Beautiful are of a more immediate nature than those of the other Forms. Initially, sensible beauty commands more attention than do examples of wisdom or virtue; it is only necessary to assess the impact of Agathon's beauty and poetry to understand the extent to which beauty demands attention.

Beauty's closeness to the human experience, coupled with the fact that *eros* naturally longs after it and is an essential aspect of our nature, renders beauty the most powerful engager of the soul, and the best incentive for the individual to gain knowledge. The experience of beauty is our gateway to recollection; when the individual experiences beauty she is able to remember or come into contact with the Forms, she is able to glimpse the universality of her particular experience. Truth, thus, need not be devoid of beauty, and beauty should not be devoid of truth, but rather, they should be combined, as both target our rational and erotic capacities in the most suitable manner.

The Beautiful thus becomes that which ignites our *eros* in the most intense way, more than any representation of wisdom could do. The Good, not possessing sensible manifestations that are as clear and immediate, and not being as alluring to our *eros* as beauty is, is not enough to ignite this primal aspect of our being into action; in order words, at the sight of goodness alone our *eros* is not immediately activated, it is not dying to step on the ladder to the Good to follow it. Arguably, if we could see the Good in its absolute form, we would follow it with more intensity than any representation of beauty, and when we do follow beauty we are in fact following the Good. For *eros* to be activated we need beautiful incentives, and in this way, the Beautiful is different from the other Forms as the one Form that is able to grant us this sensible manifestation of transcendence that we need to embark on the philosophical journey. Since *eros* is naturally attracted to beauty, by using the Beautiful we are uniting the lover and the philosopher in the same journey towards transcendence, only using a Form that is much more accessible to all individuals via the particular experience of love and beauty. Thus, beauty becomes a powerful ally for Platonic philosophical education, that when properly channeled, aids the individual to move up the line.

Eros is thus portrayed as the element of the soul that via its desire for particular beauty is able to embark on an epistemological progression towards greater knowledge, by virtue of beauty's ability to provoke critical inquiry. The ability of sensible beauty to trigger *eros* towards it, combined with beauty's compelling power to evoke in the observer thoughts of what is beyond, thereby leading the mind to thoughts of transcendence, instills in the individual a sense of belief in something other than what is perceptually immediate, thus eliciting philosophical inquiry.

In Chapter 4 I analyze the possible dangers of beauty as a pedagogical tool in addition to examining how beauty can aid in healing philosophy's limitations in terms of reaching its audience. Precisely because of its power, beauty has a dangerous edge; like Alcibiades, we can become fixated on sensible beauty as our *telos* and stagnate on the lower levels of the ladder. This is why beauty must be allied with philosophy, *eros* with reason, in order to prevent the upward blindness we see in Alcibiades. Both beauty and philosophy need each other. Philosophy's limitation in terms of engaging our *eros* can be surpassed with beauty and its power to move the soul, so that philosophy does not stand in utter otherworldliness but becomes more accessible for individuals. Beauty must be aided by reason, like the horses in the charioteer example in the *Phaedrus*. An opposing story to that of Alcibiades is the very real philosophical movement of Plato and Dante not only via beauty but of an ultimate creation in the Beautiful. Both authors undergo a similar movement to the lovers in Diotima's encomium which further elucidates how education can benefit from the appreciation of beauty, especially when this appreciation manifests in a love that recognizes the glimpses of transcendence hidden within the particular manifestation.

Plato provides a philosophical account that humanizes the metaphysical goal through human relations, and unites the persuasiveness of beauty with the desire for truth of philosophy as one. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* both emphasize beauty's ability to provoke the critical inquiry necessary to reach the aporetic disposition necessary for philosophy to begin; in sensible beauty, there is the biggest manifestation of the Good that is available for human beings, and it is here where the stairway to ideas begins. In this manner the philosophical endeavor becomes more than just phantoms or unreachable concepts, but rather a very real experience that speaks to all aspects of our being.

Chapter 2 *Eros*

2.1 Introduction: What is *eros*?

The *Symposium* is the Platonic dialogue devoted to a philosophical exploration of *eros*. With the character of Phaedrus proposing eulogies to *eros* – or love – as the theme for the night's banquet, Plato sets up a dialogue in which each speaker provides his own particular definition of *eros* one after the other and, mostly, without interruption. The style of this dialogue breaks away from the usual set-up given by the Socratic elenchus, whereby Plato has Socrates interrogate a particular interlocutor throughout the dialogue with the aim of arriving at the definition of a particular concept. Although, more often than not, this definition is not arrived at and instead of figuring what the concept *is*, Socrates and his interlocutors arrive to an understanding of what the thing *is not.* In the case of the *Symposium*, in providing consecutive speeches, Plato is able to unfold a different aspect of *eros* in each speaker's encomium, and thus, to build up, partially and slowly, an account that culminates in a more comprehensive and coalescing explanation, delivered in Diotima's story. For this reason, in order to understand better what defines *eros* in this dialogue, it is necessary to look at the parts in combination with the whole: that is, to examine each speech on its own, as an individual account, and each speech in relationship to the other speeches and to the themes of the dialogue as a whole.

Defining *eros* is fundamental to answering the question of how the erotic relates to the metaphysical in the Platonic account rendered in this dialogue; according to Thomas Cooksey, for example, the theme of the dialogue "is *eros* and the nature of love, how love shapes our moral character, informs our ethics, raises questions of being, contemplates the forms (especially the beautiful and the good), and drives the philosophical enterprise" (13). In other words, *eros*

permeates *all* aspects of the philosophical inquiry carried out in the dialogue, and thus, defining *eros* first is essential to understanding how the erotic relates to Platonic epistemology and ontology. In addition, this definition is necessary to understand why the philosopher is regarded as the quintessential erotician, and why erotic love is such a critical component of Platonic philosophical education.

I will first examine the progression in the definition of *eros* in each encomium in order to understand Diotima's all-encompassing definition, which takes up the major aspects of each eulogy and incorporates it in her comprehensive account. To do so I have divided my analysis of the speeches into two sections; the first, dealing with the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus, which begin in an exclusive relationship to a finite other to move towards universalization in Eryximachus' speech. The second group contains the speeches of Aristophanes, Agathon, and Socrates; Diotima takes up major aspects of the two previous speeches – Aristophanes' ontological account and Agathon's fixation on the Beautiful – as fundamental aspects of her own account, in which *eros* is the remedy to our ontological status and the Beautiful is the object of this desire. After examining this progression I will analyze Alcibiades' entrance as a physical representation of the experience of the beautiful that has been discussed throughout the speeches. Alcibiades' entrance and subsequent encomium of Socrates will shed light on the dangerous and beneficial aspects of erotic desire for philosophical inquiry. In the next section I will examine how *eros* works to solve the epistemological problem present in Aristophanes' ontological account of human beings, in order to understand how *eros* is capable of triggering *aporia*, the first stage for philosophical inquiry. From this examination I will move on to the analysis of the lover as the philosopher, and explain why the progression of love present in the *Symposium* is the most accessible form of philosophy, through an experience

that is open to all: love for what is beautiful. This examination will highlight the aspects of *eros* that make it essential for the action needed to embark in this epistemological progression towards more stable objects of knowledge, and this analysis will segue into an in-depth examination in the next chapter of why the Beautiful is the most powerful tool we can use for philosophical education.

2.2 From the danger of the particular to the harmony of the universal: the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus

The progression of the speeches in the dialogue shows the movement from a definition of *eros* centered on love between particular individuals, to an appreciation of the form of the Beautiful Itself, a progression which is amalgamated in Diotima's 'ladder of love' image in Socrates' speech. Phaedrus begins the discussion on *eros* and his speech stresses the effects of erotic desire, as opposed to providing a description of the nature of erotic love itself. In his speech, Phaedrus will unknowingly reveal the positive *and* dangerous effects of love in the lover, in addition to centering his account of love as directed at another individual, which is later revealed to be the foundational step of Diotima's explanation of love. Furthermore, Phaedrus will insist on virtue as a positive effect of love's influence, when in reality he praises the excesses that lovers go to when they are in love, which prove to be problematic in the context of the city and the lover's extended community.

According to Phaedrus love produces "the greatest goods" (*Symposium* 178c) and acts as the ultimate guide to the good life, as it encourages the individual to pursue virtue and avoid shameful behaviour, following the assumption that a lover would always desire to appear honourable in front of his beloved. In this manner, *eros* pushes the individual to action, since

without the threat of shame or pride, "nothing fine or great can be accomplished, in public or in private" (*Symposium* 178d). To prove his theory Phaedrus concocts the image of a love militia, an army composed of *erastai* (lovers) and their *eromenoi* (beloveds) fighting alongside one another. According to Phaedrus, this kind of formation would prove to be the "best possible system of society, for they would hold back from all that is shameful, and seek honour in each other's eyes" (*Symposium* 178e); this assumption follows Phaedrus' own foundational idea that love curbs shameful actions while encouraging honour-seeking behaviours. As shown, Phaedrus' account focuses on how the lover is affected by his love for another individual, emphasizing the relationship between two individuals separated from their relationship to others. Phaedrus himself is so enchanted by the power of *eros* that he does not believe in the existence of a human being whom love could not inspire to become courageous or brave; for Phaedrus, at the touch of love, everyone becomes a hero, a sort of Achilles that is ready – and equipped by *eros* – to fight for his beloved, even without knowledge of courage.

Phaedrus, however, seems to be more mesmerized by the beautiful idea of a god of *eros* turning mere mortals into courageous heroes, than in producing a coherent account of the effects of love. For example, Phaedrus' evidence for heroic conduct between lovers comes exclusively from poetic accounts: Alcestis sacrificing her life to go down to Hades in place of her husband Admetus (*Symposium* 179b), Orpheus, who Phaedrus explains was not as brave as Alcestis when he went down to Hades and was thus punished (*Symposium* 179d), and Achilles who revenged the death of his lover Patroclus (*Symposium* 180a). As beautiful and convincing as Phaedrus' examples appear to be initially, there is a degree of modification required, or oversight on his part in regards to the examples he is using in order to make his account of *eros* work. Perhaps a philosophical understanding of love would seek for harmony, within the soul of the individual

and within the individual and the city. In this way, the individual could better himself for his beloved in addition to maintaining a healthy relationship to his community. However, in Phaedrus' account, the lover moves into excess rather than moderation, and the desire to look good in front of the beloved takes over any sort of rational thinking.

For instance, Phaedrus paints a very courageous and superficial account of Alcestis' sacrifice for her husband Admetus. When the Fates threaten to cut Admetus' life thread they decide to give him the chance of escaping death if someone dies in lieu of him. Admetus cannot find anyone as even his parents refuse to do it and ultimately it is Alcestis, who, motivated by her love for her husband, decides to take Admetus' place (Hamilton 168). The story in itself, although emphasizing Alcestis' devotion for her husband, presents a few problems for Phaedrus' position. It would be much different if Alcestis sacrificed herself without Admetus' knowledge, but the fact that Admetus *knows* she will do it is disturbing, as it shows he values his own life over that of his beloved. Moreover, the fact that he seeks for a replacement, even considering his parents or his wife, already demonstrates that Admetus' love prompts him not to courage, but to an even greater self-love as he would rather others die than himself. These are details that Phaedrus ignores and that work against his own logic. Phaedrus is ignoring the fact that Admetus lets his wife die for him when it is his time to go; according to Phaedrus' own reasoning, since they are both lovers, both should display the same dauntless behaviour.

Consequently, Phaedrus' understanding of Alcestis' sacrifice overlooks his statement that a lover would not want to appear shameful in front of his beloved and vice versa. Love, for Phaedrus, is supposed to teach us about shame when acting dishonourably; the problem is that there are *two* individuals in a romantic relationship, so according to his own statement, both would be prompted by love to be honourable and to avoid shame. Under this structure, Alcestis

is indeed prompted by love to be honourable, to sacrifice herself for the life of her beloved. However, under the same structure, Admetis *should* feel shame that he is letting his beloved die for him for no particular reason other than he wants to live. Accordingly, under Phaedrus' theory, both Alcestis and her husband should desire their own sacrifice before the sacrifice of the other, as neither of them would want to appear dishonourable. This reciprocity might work in the case of the love militia, as it would encourage them both to keep fighting, but in this particular case it would just leave the couple at a standstill as they could not reach a unanimous decision. As a result, this example is not really appropriate for what Phaedrus is trying to convey; that is, that love instills in the lover courage and a fear of shame.

Similarly, Phaedrus is quick to dismiss Orpheus' journey into Hades because he does not choose to die, but rather goes back to the underworld while still alive to persuade Hades and Persephone to bring his wife back to life. Phaedrus attributes the failure of the mission to Orpheus not wanting to sacrifice his life to bring back Eurydice; however, in doing this he overlooks the fact that Orpheus' mission fails because he impatiently checks to see if Eurydice is behind him before they have both left the underworld. Thus, it is not that Orpheus' journey to the underworld is not enough to save Eurydice, – in fact, going to the underworld while still alive in order to try to persuade Hades would require enough courage and demonstrates classical heroic behaviour – but rather, it is just Orpheus' desire to see if his beloved was with him that costs him his love for the second time. Phaedrus overlooks this detail either because he truly does not remember the story correctly or because emphasizing Orpheus' lack of physical sacrifice fits his schema of love better, even when it is not true: "they did not give him the woman herself, because they thought he was soft […] and did not dare to die like Alcestis for Love's sake" (*Symposium* 179e). Thus, his second example is fitting to his argument in the sense that Orpheus'

love for Eurydice propels him to embark on the journey to the underworld. However, Phaedrus chooses to criticize Orpheus for not going to excess, that is, for not sacrificing himself in body and in soul. Whereas it seems Orpheus did the rational thing, persuading Hades to bring back Eurydice so they could *both* be together, Phaedrus sees this lack of complete sacrifice as unacceptable, and in doing so he misses what could have been a good point for his theory, which is Orpheus' actual courage to go down to Hades triggered by love.

In addition, Phaedrus uses Homer's representation of Achilles' heroic behaviour as an example of love's guidance. Phaedrus describes Achilles' sacrifice to revenge his lover's death as heroic and as a product of the courage that love instills in the lover. However, in doing so, Phaedrus disregards the damage that Achilles' actions inflict on the bigger community. In Book 1 of the *Iliad* (lines 357-427) Achilles complains to his mother Thetis that Agamemnon has taken his prize Briseis away from him, for which he wants divine retribution. This occurs after he tries to kill Agamemnon for taking Briseis away, even though they are fighting for the same side, and is actually stopped by Athena. Regardless, he asks his mother to persuade Zeus to go against the Achaeans in favour of the Trojans. In this case, Achilles' loss prompts him not to courage, but to vindictiveness and rage, and actually causes human losses for the side for which he is supposed to be fighting. Achilles' desires are so single-minded and strong that they threaten the well-being of his own community, which goes against Phaedrus' point of love leading one to virtue. Moreover, Phaedrus ignores Achilles' debate over whether he should pursue his own *eros* for a life of honour over any kind of relationship, including the lover-beloved relationship that Phaedrus is defending. In fact, it is honour and immortal fame that Achilles sought in battle, even

when Patroclus' death acts as the final trigger for his rage.[1] Additionally, Phaedrus overlooks the fact that this account presents an *eros* entirely focused on the particular 'other,' that is, an *eros* entirely aimed at another individual, which proves to be problematic in a general context, as we will examine in the following speeches.

This problem occurs when the individual becomes entirely bound up with a temporal and finite other in a way that clashes with the dictates and rules that ensure the well-being of the whole. Phaedrus fails to explain "how erotic attachments could possibly avoid coming into conflict with one's attachment to the community. For it seems human beings treat their loved ones differently than they treat others" (Scott & Welton 46), which indicates the broader problem of how one's love for a particular individual can come into conflict with one's duty to her community. For example, how is Phaedrus sure that what the lover desires for his beloved will also be in accordance to what is good for the community as a whole? The problem of focusing one's *eros* entirely on another individual is that one's attention to the good of the whole can be disregarded. In fact, this description of *eros,* entirely focused on a finite and particular other, proves to be problematic, especially in the context of Phaedrus' love militia, whereby the lovers could disregard the safety of the entire army in order to rescue their beloveds, much like Achilles causes hundreds of deaths because he is angry that Agamemnon took Briseis away, a detail that Phaedrus overlooks. An opposing example to Phaedrus' love militia would be the image of the guardians in the *Republic* who are trained to think of the well-being of the whole before their own well-being, and thus are capable of guarding the city in the most efficient manner, through the proper ordering of every faction of the polis. In this case, the communal concerns are directly

1. In fact, Elizabeth Belfiore points out that it is Achilles' error in judgment which causes Patroclus' death in the first place, an important detail that Phaedrus omits as it does not suit his account (122).

juxtaposed with the concerns over a particular individual, demonstrating the extremes that Phaedrus deems appropriate in his own account.

In fact, in Phaedrus' account *eros* is viewed purely in terms of *chrestos* (usefulness), a utilitarian approach that presents *eros* in the most fitting light for Phaedrus' own description. For his own interest, Phaedrus thus changes Achilles' story "to suit his own erotic tastes and purposes" (Hyland 30), to show that *eros* brings gain if one is a beloved, like Phaedrus himself.[2] In creating an account of *eros* that focuses on his own self-interest, Phaedrus produces "something which looks like virtue" (Strauss 50), in the absence of virtue itself, a process that will be repeated in the following speeches. It is not that the love that Phaedrus describes focuses solely on the well-being of the lover, but rather that most of the benefits are reaped by the beloved. Phaedrus, being a beloved himself, has crafted a speech that would be the most beneficial account of love for himself, seeing as the beloved is the one reaping the rewards of love's effects. In this manner, Phaedrus exalts Alcestis' sacrifice, as the one benefiting from the actions is Alcestis' beloved Admetus, and perhaps this is why he criticizes Orpheus so much, for not sacrificing himself entirely in order to bring Eurydice back to life.

Just like in the Platonic dialogue named after himself, in which he is infatuated by the apparent beauty of the form of Lysias' speech, Phaedrus tailors his eulogy to appear to be beautiful to the untrained ear, praising as virtuous actions which in reality lack virtue, but are rather entirely subjected to a utilitarian criterion, as pointed out by Leo Strauss (53) and Drew Hyland (30). However, Phaedrus' account does provide two important insights that Diotima later picks up on her own exposition on love. First, Phaedrus provides the recognition that "*eros* is a

2. As a handsome, young man Phaedrus would traditionally be perceived as the beloved courted by the older, wise man.

double-edged sword" (Hyland 31) that can benefit the lover and beloved as well as put them in danger, even if Phaedrus does not recognize this ambivalence himself. Second, his account focuses on *eros* as concerned with the beauty of a particular individual, which is the stepping stone on the progression towards the beautiful itself that will later on appear in Diotima's 'ladder of love' image. In this manner, Phaedrus presents a eulogy to *eros* that deals with the first step of the Socratic account of love: the love for a particular and finite other.

The next speech, that of Pausanias, takes Phaedrus' focus on love for a particular individual one step further, as Pausanias proposes two operating modalities for *eros*: erotic desire that is fixated on physical manifestations of beauty, and the *eros* for the soul and spiritual enlightenment. In this manner, Pausanias keeps the focus of his account of love on an individual level while simultaneously taking Phaedrus' emphasis from the physical by elevating the attraction to the spiritual. In addition, Pausanias emphasizes *eros*' connection to the beautiful while further developing the idea of love's usefulness for the polis in a way that love does not present a danger to the whole. Furthermore, Pausanias advocates for the city's need to regulate erotic desire so as to find harmony between the people and the state, and seemingly to protect both the lover and beloved who engage in romantic relationships, whereas in reality, his laws are meant to protect the lover rather than the beloved. Pausanias' advocacy for the regulation of desire elevates Phaedrus' account of martial love into the communal and political sphere.

Pausanias sets out to define love first, something that his predecessor does not do, and he divides *eros* into two kinds: the Heavenly Aphrodite and the Common Aphrodite, which refer to the distinction between the spiritual realm that the soul inhabits, and the corporeal, particular sphere that the body partakes in, elevating the first one as superior and less vulgar, as its focus is on the soul. Pausanias essentially states two things: first, *eros* is inextricably connected to

Aphrodite (*Symposium* 180d), introducing in an explicit manner the connection between *eros* and beauty which will be central to understanding the ontological and epistemological ways in which *eros* operates. Secondly, Pausanias states that love can focus on the beauty present in the empirical world as well as the more 'noble' beauty present in the divine world, thereby creating a hierarchy of the objects of *eros* which places empirical beauty at a lower level than that which the spiritually beautiful inhabits. In addition, Pausanias proposes that *eros* in itself is neither good nor bad, but rather that this action becomes either good or bad in its performance and intent: "considered in itself, no action is either good or bad, honourable or shameful" (*Symposium* 180c).

Pausanias states that the Common Aphrodite is a "love felt by the vulgar" (*Symposium* 181b), as it gives prevalence to the physical connection and not to the soul, an account that regards the physical as being preoccupied with sexual activity, in contrast to the soul that cares exclusively for the pursuit of wisdom. In stating that this kind of love prefers the body over the soul Pausanias also associates it with relationships between men and women, as he states that this is "love felt by the vulgar, who are attached to women no less than to boys" (*Symposium* 181b). In addition, Pausanias claims that "whether they do it honorably or not is of no concern" (*Symposium* 181b); that is, he explains that this kind of lover pursues the beloved in whichever way is possible, without caring for honour or shame. This is Pausanias' first contradiction, as he earlier stated that the love is not itself bad, but it is the mode in which it is performed, which means that the object of love could either be the body or the soul, as long as this desire is carried out virtuously. On the other hand, the Heavenly Aphrodite *eros* is "free from the lewdness of youth" (*Symposium* 181c) and thus finds satisfaction not in the corporeal but in contemplation and intellectual discussion. Consequently, it desires the soul more than the body, and Pausanias

draws a connection between this Aphrodite and all male relationships (*Symposium* 181c). Both kinds of *eros* have different roles for Pausanias, as he elevates the Heavenly Aphrodite to be the one able to move the individual towards virtue and spiritual betterment.

In this manner, Pausanias exposes two ways in which *eros* operates: one focused on the non-sensible, which he finds to be *kalos* (beautiful) and beneficial, and the one focused on the corporeal, which he finds to be vulgar and ugly. Much like Phaedrus, Pausanias will use his own definition of *eros* to his advantage, thus attempting to demonstrate the 'beautiful' way to conduct *eros* for his own purposes, proposing love for beautiful boys - which he identifies as the Heavenly Aphrodite in contrast to any other kind of love - as the true conduct to philosophical enlightenment, in an excellent demonstration of his sophistic relativism. By defining two kinds of love, Pausanias, the lawyer of the group, already begins with an approach that leads to relativity, as he will define the better one of the options by his own measure and to fit his own ideals. His sophistry is evident in the fact that he becomes the measure of his own account, being himself a man who engages in the Heavenly Aphrodite and simultaneously presenting the Heavenly Aphrodite as the only conduit to philosophy.[3] In addition, as we will examine shortly, in his explanation of the laws concerning *eros* Pausanias will craft an account that protects the lover, like himself, of any sort of failure in the romantic conquest.

For Pausanias, actions are "neither good nor bad, but become so by virtue of the manner in which they are performed" (Cobb 56); in this case, actions are good depending on what Aphrodite the individual chooses to follow. In making a distinction between the *eros* for physical

3. Victorino Tejera even suggests that Aristophanes' hiccups are a reaction to "the dishonest cynicism of Pausanas' self-serving sophistry about sex" (438), as he seems to be elevating his own practices as superior.

beauty and that for spiritual beauty, Pausanias associates heterosexuality with common *eros*, that is a purely vulgar need to procreate (*Symposium* 181b), and the kind of classical Greek man-youth relationships with heavenly *eros* focused on mental edification. Yet, even in the homosexual lover-beloved relationship the physical act remains, but the difference is that it is brought under the law in Athens, which is set up in such a way as to promote this kind of relationship. For example, Pausanias states that in Elis and Boetia, societies that he regards as inarticulate and not to the cultural level of Athens, taking a lover, regardless of the situation, is always deemed as good (*Symposium* 182b). Conversely, in societies reigned by political absolutism, like Ionia or the Persian empire, taking a lover is disgraceful, as the nature of the polis condemns any sort of *eros* that is not directed towards it: "it is no good for rulers if the people they rule cherish ambitions for themselves or form strong bonds of friendship with one another… these are precisely the effects of philosophy, sport, and especially of Love" (*Symposium* 182c). This statement foreshadows the revolt of Aristophanes' mythical humans, who powered by their strong bonds attempt to overthrow their rulers. It thus seems that love must neither be prohibited nor freely allowed, but rather the city must find a way to regulate it so as to get the highest profit from it. Extremes, then, must be avoided, and harmony, a concept which Eryximachus will develop, must be sought: "plain condemnation of Love reveals lust for power in the rulers and cowardice in the ruled, while indiscriminate approval testifies to general dullness and stupidity" (*Symposium* 182d).

After explaining what to avoid, Pausanias moves on to an examination of Athenian law concerning love. He explains that in Athens lovers are encouraged in every way to pursue their beloveds and their actions are deemed noble or shameful depending on their success or failure. Athenian law praises and encourages "lovers for totally extraordinary acts" (*Symposium* 182e);

that is, Athenian customs support extreme acts of love to be performed, to the extent that were these acts performed for any other goal they would be deemed as shameful. Therefore, when it comes to the lover and the actions performed as a result of his *eros*, Athenian law grants the lover complete freedom. For Pausanias, virtue should be the goal of pursuing love the correct way, as he states that "love's value to the city as a whole and to the citizens is immeasurable, for he compels the lover and his loved on alike to make virtue their central concern" (*Symposium* 185c). Thus it stands that Pausanias' proposition is that love works for the betterment of the polis because it nurtures virtue in lover and beloved alike. For this reason, Pausanias explains that "the freedom given to the lover by both gods and men according to our custom is immense" (*Symposium* 183).

However, it is important to emphasize that within Pausanias' complex speech – a complexity which he likes as it indicates superiority according to what he said about Boetia in relationship to Athens - the freedom that Athenian law gives is fully focused on the lover rather than on the beloved. Not only is the lover allowed to perform any action for the sake of his romantic conquest, but Pausanias argues for laws that would protect the lover from 'unfruitful' conquests; that is, from wasting "time and effort" (*Symposium* 181e) on a beautiful boy whose intellectual outcome cannot be predicted. Whereas the lover is allowed to perform any action for the sake of his romantic conquest, even those that incur shame, the beloved is advised to play coy to the lover's advances by his family and by society (*Symposium* 183d), while simultaneously encouraged to give in to the lover's advances out of a desire to become virtuous. Pausanias even states that beloveds are "justified in performing any service for a lover who can make [them] wise and virtuous" (*Symposium* 184e), even if this lover turns out to be unable to

provide this intellectual edification, and even that in this case *only* it is “never shameful to be deceived; in every other case it is shameful” (*Symposium* 185a).

As we can see, Pausanias has set up a system whereby the lover, regardless of his intentions, is always in the right, as he is always pursuing the Heavenly Aphrodite that is associated with boys and encouraged and regulated by the city. In fact, Pausanias is defending the way Athenian custom has set up this interaction, as is demonstrated by the way he emphasizes the superiority of Athenian custom in his earlier comparison of how this practice is carried out in other cities. In this manner, even if the lover has bad intentions, as long as he does not make these evident to the beloved he is fine to pursue him by any means and will most likely get his way since the city encourages the beloved to take the lover for the sake of virtue. On the other hand, the beloved is not protected from disingenuous lovers and is actually encouraged to give in to the lover regardless of the outcome, merely because the *reason* of his giving in would be noble: that is, giving in for the sake of virtue. Pausanias in this manner has set up a system that protects lovers, like himself, and that appears to be good for both parts when in fact it is beneficial for only one.

Moreover, Pausanias’ argument encounters further problems due to his advocacy for the traditional pederastic relationship of ancient Greece. For instance, in trying to legitimate pederasty, Pausanias develops an account that praises and encourages *eros* for intelligent males, whom he associates with the young beautiful boys that are the object of the love of the Heavenly Aphrodite. However, by Greek standards these would be older men as opposed to beautiful youths, since older men are supposed to provide the wisdom in the relationship and the boys are supposed to provide beauty. Moreover, as Hyland points out, Pausanias’ relativistic approach to *eros* is a problem in itself, since by his own relativism his account of male-male relationships

over male-female or female-female is flawed, since for all relationships what should matter is the *manner* in which *eros* is conducted, not the desire for partners of the same or opposite gender (32). Because even though he explains the Athenian laws regarding custom and the protection of lovers, these laws are specifically designed to protect the kind of male-male relationships. First, because a true relationship of virtue, which is what he explains the goal of love is, can *only* be achieved in this kind of relationship, and he states that virtue is the only reason why one person should subject himself to another (*Symposium* 184c). Second, he states that the aim of the Athenian customs is to "separate the wheat from the chaff, the proper love from the vile" (*Symposium* 184a). By proper love Pausanias refers to the individual who loves the soul, and by vile he refers to "the common, vulgar lover, who loves the body rather than the soul" (*Symposium* 184e), which he already associated with male-female relationships. In fact, Pausanias' own *eros* for beautiful boys moves his argument, as he praises the lover who succeeds in seducing his beloved even if his seduction is conducted through lies, to the extreme of "advocating that the beloved trade sex for wisdom" (Hyland 33). Coincidentally, the idea that wisdom can be transferred from one individual to the other by physical means is a common misconception in the dialogue, as shown in Agathon's request that Socrates sit next to him order to obtain some of his wisdom (*Symposium* 175d), and as will be evident in Alcibiades' eulogy to Socrates. Thus, for Pausanias, the Heavenly Aphrodite love is the one associated with a particular kind of relationship, one in which the lover receives the biggest benefits and therefore it is a kind of love that must be regulated by the city so that the lover can have his interests protected and the city can ensure harmony, a moderation that was lacking in Phaedrus' account.

Even though Pausanias portrays the Heavenly and Common Aphrodite as mutually exclusive, the one thing they have in common is that they are in fact both Aphrodite – that is,

both are still not only erotic and beautiful, but divine, insofar as they are both associated with the goddess. This connection describes, in a way, the relationship and conflict between the images of beauty versus beauty itself, as the Common Aphrodite can be associated with images of beauty capable of being understood by limited human understanding, and the Heavenly Aphrodite with beauty itself in the pursuit of wisdom and the Forms. Furthermore, as we have seen, *eros* is shown as being beneficial for a city when properly regulated, so that it must be promoted with some degree of moderation in order for it to work for the advantage of the rulers, and not result in excessive behaviours like the ones discussed in Phaedrus' speech. This idea foreshadows Aristophanes' myth, wherein love is actually used as a solution for individual hubris and the lust for the divine realm, and wherein moderation helps the rulers to maintain their power over individuals. Pausanias' speech repeats the notion that love encourages virtuous actions in individuals that was present in Phaedrus' eulogy, with the exception that he states that some of these actions are "so extraordinary, in fact, that if [the lovers] performed them for any other purpose whatever, they would reap the most profound contempt" (*Symposium* 183a). In other words, the lengths to which an individual goes for love produce actions that, even though acceptable for love, are deemed unacceptable in other situations; for example, a lover begging his beloved for love is deemed acceptable and virtuous, whereas an individual begging for a job is deemed shameful. Through this distinction Pausanias emphasizes the notion, already present in Phaedrus' account, that the acts that love is accused of producing are not virtuous in themselves, but deemed to be virtuous merely because of the nature of the object.

However, with this distinction, Pausanias touches upon a topic that Phaedrus overlooks: reason is somewhat pushed out of the equation when it comes to love as a motivator for actions. This is the reason why Pausanias is so concerned with law in relation to love, and why he praises

a moderate hold on desire to obtain the most useful results for the city. Pausanias is aware that either extreme is dangerous as people are rarely satisfied; however, with rules in place individuals are shaped by custom to not only follow the rules, but to allow for certain kinds of behaviour that the law has already deemed as suitable, such as the extreme actions for the lovers and the giving in to the lover for the beloveds. The problem for philosophy that Pausanias as a lawyer does not see is that under this law virtue does not become the main goal, but adherence to custom is deemed as more important, as we saw in the case of the beloved being encouraged to give in to the lover regardless of the outcome. In this manner, for both Phaedrus and Pausanias love can still provoke the individual to pursue shameful actions as opposed to avoiding them, and also can encourage the individual to sacrifice the common benefit for that of his beloved, only in Pausanias' case these actions are now protected by law.

Pausanias' speech thus reveals "a half-understood awareness that love can be both the best and the worst thing for the state" (Gould 27), and for the person. From this moment, the dangerous element inherent in *eros* begins to become apparent. Pausanias blames the negative and dangerous aspect of *eros* on the object of love, going back to the Heavenly/Common Aphrodite distinction made earlier. Hence, if one chooses to love the body and not the soul, one chooses to love what is prone to change and decay, and thus one's love will be "inconstant, since what [one] loves is itself mutable and unstable" (*Symposium* 183e). According to this train of thought, the lover would be fixated on the body, which is bound to change, thus not only would move from beloved to beloved constantly, but would engage in deceptive promises, as the promise of love will fade as soon as the beauty in the body disappears or changes.

The right sort of lover, on the contrary, will love what is permanent and does not change, i.e., the soul. The most interesting point that Pausanias makes with this distinction is the idea that

one is able to choose the object of her love, and moreover, that a human being is able to separate the physical from the spiritual in order to love solely the non-corporeal. Diotima addresses this problem by grounding the quest for beauty in the particular *eros* for physical beauty to later move on to less corporeal beauty and more stable objects of knowledge and love. Pausanias' account moves from the particularity of Phaedrus' object of love to the distinction between corporeal and noumenal beauty, while still focusing on the particularity of the human soul and propelling the soul to superiority over the body in an absolute manner. The right sort of lover, according to this account, will thus strive for virtuous action and self-improvement purely in the spiritual realm, and this is the kind of love that Pausanias proposes as valuable to the city "as a whole" (*Symposium* 185b), as it promotes virtue, while keeping *eros*, like Phaedrus does, "as primarily a personal, romantic phenomenon" (Hyland 34). Thus, according to Pausanias love must be regulated by the city to as to achieve the moderation that it requires to be utilized properly for the benefit of the city. Only under a regime wherein love is both encouraged and regulated can lovers achieve a proper harmony between their desires and the common concerns of the state. In addition to introducing the subject of harmony, which will be present in the next speeches, Pausanias also draws the connection to beauty, which will be particularly important for Agathon and Socrates' encomiums, especially when beauty is seen as the ultimate object of love there is.

Eryximachus' speech comes next as he takes over from Aristophanes who is suddenly afflicted by hiccups. Eryximachus' speech "moves beyond the realm of the human and social on which Pausanias focused" (Cobb 66), and presents *eros* from the point of view of art, of *techne,* the skill of medicine that views love as bringing health to the body, as the harmony of the parts of a particular whole that is produced by moderation, by the proper order. This mention of order,

already seen in Pausanias' account of love under law is taken by Eryximachus and moved into the natural world so that this order becomes a natural order that is present in nature when the right sort of balance is achieved. For Eryximachus, love is not inherently in the human soul, but rather, is a force that directs everything in both the human and the divine domains; it is a force that drives human beings, it is desire itself, a desire for harmony. According to Eryximachus, medicine has taught him that *eros* is "a significantly broader phenomenon" (*Symposium* 186a) than mere attraction toward physical beauty, or even divine beauty. On the contrary, *eros* "directs everything that occurs" (*Symposium* 186b) as a universal or cosmic principle of attraction. This view moves the account of love from the psychological to an account of physics that encompasses the whole cosmos. From the love between people to the two different kinds of love that exist we are now taken to an explanation of love as a broader phenomenon.

Eryximachus keeps expanding on Phaedrus' initial account of *eros* as centered on the other and takes it to a universal plane. In addition, he includes the principle of harmony that was lacking from Phaedrus' account, and that was present in Pausanias' encomium, transforming it into the result of natural force. For Eryximachus, harmony is a natural consequence of love as a cosmic force. In addition, this principle of harmony seems to touch on Pausanias' description of the control of *eros* that is required by the polis; only in this case, harmony is almost divinely induced and better seen in relationship to the divine, so that piety and the proper relationship to the gods become the consequence of love. Moreover, Eryximachus will argue for the proper moderation of *eros*, regardless of its object of love, rather than its eradication, and will present the physician as the proper facilitator for this harmony in the body. Thus, Eryximachus will take the discussion of love into the universal plane, taking the power away from the individual and

even from the city itself and giving it to the natural forces that he recognizes to be the realm of *eros.*

Eryximachus explains that love is manifested in the body in two ways: as health and as disease. This association between the healthy and diseased states of love echoes Pausanias' distinction between the heavenly and vulgar love, with the distinction that Eryximachus opposes health to disease, and Pausanias places heavenly and vulgar love not as opposites, but in a hierarchy of desire. Eryximachus keeps the discussion on the physical realm, even though he does mention that love is a force that affects the divine domain as well. However, his aim is to show how it is the physician's task to find the harmony between the parts, whether of the body or of the universe: "a good practitioner knows how to affect the body and how to transform its desires; he can implant the proper species of Love when it is absent and eliminate the other sort whenever it occurs" (*Symposium* 186d). In this manner Eryximachus is referring to the physician as the person who *knows,* who has the proper *techne* to know not only the state of healthiness that the individual should attain, but how to attain it. In Pausanias' account love was reined in by law; as the lawyer of the group, Pausanias proposed a system whereby love was under the domain of *nomos* (law) in order to achieve some sort of balance, whether this balance resulted in a greater protection of the lover than the beloved. Eryximachus picks up on this language of balance but takes it to the sphere of medicine, to his sphere, in order to argue that it is not the lawyer or the politician who is able to balance the desires of love, but rather the physician who can find this necessary harmony.

A good physician knows how to find the harmony between the parts for the benefit of the whole, thus, he knows how to transform the body's desires so that only the good sort of love takes place, bringing health and avoiding disease. Eryximachus' argument is that *techne* allows

human beings to control *eros* for our physical pleasure, arguing that skill can allow "control of the cosmos by human nature" (Hyland 35). Eryximachus describes the physician in the same way as the philosopher is described in other Platonic dialogues, as the individual capable of reconciling the parts of the soul to create harmony, seen in the image of Socrates as a midwife. Love is thus described in this account as a force that must find its proper order, which for Eryximachus is a task for the person who knows about bodies, the physician. In this manner he not only assigns his own profession with the highest status in relationship to *eros*, but also maintains the discussion of *eros* on a physical realm, assigning the ability to induce harmony to the physician, who now becomes the ultimate sage in regards to the body. In this manner Eryximachus argues that love guides every practical skill that human beings have, such as farming, medicine, or even poetry (*Symposium* 187a), while simultaneously explaining that love, and the harmony love seeks, is under the control of the good physician.

Eryximachus also applies this type of harmony and proper order found by the good sort of love to the seasons, as the good kind of love can be seen as imposing some sort of cosmic power of balance, echoing Empedocles' account of the cosmos based on the opposing forces of love and strife. Furthermore, Eryximachus states that the human goal is to "maintain the proper kind of Love and to attempt to cure the kind that is diseased" (*Symposium* 188c), especially in relationship with the gods, since impiety occurs when the good kind of love, i.e. the proper order, is rejected. In this manner, maintaining a proper balance of desires, a healthy body and soul, is what makes individuals pious, foreshadowing the grip on *eros* that the gods will impose to curb human hubris on Aristophanes' account, as the gods punish individuals inflicting a radical change in their nature to punish them for their hubristic desires. In addition, this argument echoes Pausanias' statement that love was useful for the city because it induced the individual to be

virtuous, but in this case virtue is specified as piety and the proper place of the individual not only in relationship to the city, but to the entire cosmos.

Furthermore, Eryximachus touches upon the idea of the dangers of love, brought up in Phaedrus' encomium and present in Pausanias' need to look at love in subjugation to law. Eryximachus states that "we must be careful to enjoy [love's] pleasures without slipping into debauchery" (*Symposium* 187e). The problem seems to be how to enjoy the pleasures of love but in moderation. At this point, the problem does not lie any more with the idea of whether a certain kind of *eros* is sick or not; that is, the problem is not whether our *eros* is of the heavenly or vulgar kind, but rather how either kind can be enjoyed as long as one knows how to moderate one's desires. Thus, from Pausanias' radical proposition that all love that involves the corporeal is vulgar, we are brought to a middle point, where both kinds of *eros* are accepted as long as one does not incur either extreme, either through self-moderation or with assistance from a physician who possesses the appropriate *techne*. Even though at this point Eryximachus argues for a physician of the body, the language is evocative of Socratic midwifery, whereby Socrates personifies the physician for the soul that aids the individual in the attainment of truth.

It is interesting to note that Eryximachus mentions the art of divination, of which Diotima is a participant, as the "practice that produces loving affection between gods and men; it is simply the science of the effects of Love on justice and piety" (*Symposium* 188d). Even though Eryximachus has argued for the physician as the proper vessel to find the harmony in the body, through this statement he reveals, perhaps inadvertently, that it is not in his realm of possibility to achieve this proper harmony with the divine, which takes up the majority of Aristophanes' following encomium. Furthermore, it is Diotima in fact who practices the art of divination and

who trains Socrates in the art of *ta erotika*, which signifies that her art, which Socrates shares, is the solution to the problem that Aristophanes' myth will pose.

Eryximachus' overconfidence in his own craft expands *eros* beyond the reaches of human control, arguing that *eros* is responsible for the harmony in the seasons and the cosmos, while paradoxically assigning a human vessel, the physician, to control *eros* and shape it in such a way as to produce harmony. From Phaedrus' account centered on the particular other, to Pausanias' division between erotic and spiritual love, Eryximachus proposes the idea of a proper order not only within the individual, but in relationship to the gods, which will be a main aspect of Aristophanes' story. In fact, this need for harmony that Eryximachus introduces in his encomium will be vital not only for a proper understanding of *eros*, but so that the individual does not incur in extreme behaviours like the ones suggested in Phaedrus' account. In addition, Diotima's encomium, in which balance is struck between opposites, will rely on the importance of harmony within the self, between others, and with the transcendent, missing from Phaedrus' account and suggested in legal and natural ways in Pausanias and Eryximachus' panegyrics respectively.

Moreover, through the interruption of Alcibiades, we will be witnesses to how the lover can fall into excess if harmony is not properly attained. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, Eryximachus' suggestion that the physician is the ultimate knower of bodies, and thus the most capable of achieving this state of bodily and spiritual harmony in others, will be picked up indirectly in Diotima's speech and Alcibiades' behaviour. Eryximachus' physician foreshadows in a way the image of Socrates as a facilitator of beauty, or rather, of creation in the beautiful that Diotima will pick up as a fundamental aspect of her theory. Just like the physician helps the individual to rule out excess in order to achieve spiritual and bodily health, Socrates' image of the philosopher as a midwife encompasses these attributes and more, as the midwife

aims to move the individual into producing 'truths.' Thus, Eryximachus' insistence on the harmony produced by love and the physician as the facilitator of the latter will be important in Diotima's exposition, but most importantly in the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades as I will examine it in Chapter 4, section 2. In this manner, *eros* has evolved thus far from the fixation on the beauty of a particular other present in Phaedrus' account, which can be both dangerous and beneficial, to the necessity of particular *eros* to coexist in harmony with the whole, whether within the *polis* or in relation to the divine, as explained by both Pausanias and Eryximachus. *Eros* has thus far evolved to point towards the proper relationship with the divine, so that it can be enjoyed in moderation if the individual knows how to channel properly his *eros.*

2.3 The ladder to completion: the speeches of Aristophanes, Agathon, and Socrates

Aristophanes' origin myth deals with the ontological condition of human nature and *eros* as the fundamental desire for human beings to regain the wholeness that they once lost in their attempt to overthrow the gods. According to the story, at the beginning there were three kinds of human beings: the male kind, offspring of the sun, the female kind, offspring of the earth, and the androgynous kind, offspring of the moon who had both female and male parts. In their original form, human beings were "terrible" in strength, and thus, "had great ambitions" (*Symposium* 190b). The ambition that Aristophanes refers to is their desire for the power of the gods, their hubris, which posed a threat to the divine authorities because of the power that human beings enjoyed in their original nature.

As a result, these beings attempted to overthrow the gods by ascending to heaven, which encouraged the gods to get rid of them altogether. However, as much as they posed a threat to the divine authorities they were also necessary, as the gods needed them for the worship that they

provided as well as for the sacrifices that they offered to them. Thus, the gods are forced to find a way to restore the proper order between them and human beings that would allow the former to maintain power, much like the rulers in Pausanias' account and the harmony sought by the physicians in Eryximachus' story. The harmony between human beings and the gods is something that Eryximachus leaves to the art of divination, which is capable of producing this balance between both realms. However, like Pausanias' *eros* under law that benefits the lover more than the beloved, the gods bring human *eros* under control in a way that benefits the gods themselves, by redirecting human ambition from the divine to the human, from desiring the transcendent to desiring each other. This account will pose problems in Diotima's 'ladder of love,' whereby the power of desiring the particular other is sometimes powerful enough to prevent the individual from going up the ladder in the first place.[4] The divine thus sought to moderate human beings so that they could still fulfill their utilitarian *telos*, and decided to divide human beings in half so that they would lose the power they originally had in their union: "as he cut each one, [Zeus] commanded Apollo to turn its face and half its neck towards the wound, so that each person would see that he'd been cut and keep better order" (*Symposium* 190e). In the myth, control from the gods comes through control of individual *eros* that is safely redirected from the divine towards the self; as human beings long for the union that they once experienced and that they cannot possess anymore, their ambitions are completely taken over by this lack and rerouted from the divine sphere.

As described, Aristophanes' *eros* is directed exclusively toward particular individuals; in fact, in the most immediate sense, it is directed toward the self, since individuals now search for the part of their nature that they were forced to relinquish. This account of *eros* emphasizes the

4. Alcibiades is an example of what happens when this fixation for the temporal other cannot be eliminated, and I will examine this problem in chapter 4, in view of his relationship with Socrates.

need for *nomos* to restrain the dangerous aspects of erotic desire within a city, in addition to demonstrating the capacity for *eros* to work for the good of the polis when controlled in a particular manner. However, Aristophanes' account also proves to be problematic for philosophy. As Strauss points out, "you cannot understand *eros* if you do not see it in the element of rebellion" (127). That is, only through the depiction of frantic *eros* can one fully understand the power that *eros* has over individuals, and nowhere is it more obvious than in Aristophanes' story, where ambition is replaced by the authorities through redirection of desire to a particular other who is also the self. *Eros* requires limitation, *nomos* - which in the story is seen in terms of the proper relationship to the divine, subservience - and the physical satisfaction that Zeus provides to individuals to keep them content and with their ambitions away from Olympus. Now, *eros* is not only seen in relation to the mandatory subservience to the divine, but to the newfound will of desiring an 'other' that human beings did not possess before, and who grants them, in a way, their first taste of freedom. The understanding of *eros* is possible only in relation to order and the proper relationship with the divine; it transcends the need for a harmony of the body. In other words, whereas in Eryximachus' eulogy the state of harmony desired for the individual was independent of and not responsible for the harmony of others or the individual's environment, which as we saw was left for divination and not medicine to take care of, in Aristophanes' account, individual harmony is not enough. For Aristophanes the individual must be in conformity with others and the whole. In this case, the whole is the divine, and now *eros* wishes to maintain the *status quo* of the gods' hierarchical roles, and for individuals to seek harmony with them means to maintain this state, directing their *eros* somewhere else. It is this control of *eros* that allows the individual to achieve inner harmony as well as the external harmony with the gods that is necessary for inner harmony to occur in the first place. When *eros*

is properly controlled and directed, it can prove to be a powerful force for authority to keep individuals in order. In that sense, "Aristophanes' *eros*, like that of Phaedrus and Pausanias, is a civilizing force" (Belfiore 131).

Because there is a need for order between humans and the gods Aristophanes' *eros* is horizontally directed – as opposed to Socrates' vertical *eros* towards the Forms – and this is the reason why this account poses limitations for philosophical inquiry. In directing one's *eros* exclusively to particular others, one is excluding the divine realm, which Platonically would translate to the Forms and proper objects of knowledge. For Aristophanes' individuals there is an epistemological impediment inherent in their ontological condition: since the object of their thought is changing and particular, the quality of their thought is changing and particular as well, falling in the category of opinion rather than knowledge. Thus, from a Platonic perspective, "there is a pettiness, a limitation, involved in this essentially accidental individual, and love in the fuller sense has a wider scope" (Strauss 119). That is, *eros*, in the fullest sense, and as will be shown by Diotima, must be able to be directed from the particular to the universal, and not have the universal limited because of the particular. The problem arises when the particular engulfs the individual to the extent that there is no external *eros,* as most *eros* is being directed toward the possession of the beautiful as seen in a particular other. Aristophanes' account poses this limitation for philosophy because in a very real way, in his story, human beings were reprimanded for searching for something beyond themselves, this something being what is divine and a source of knowledge and power. Being chastised for these symbolically philosophical attempts, human beings are now left with *eros* that is solely directed to the restoration of their physical and spiritual natures in the form of their human partner. This fixation impedes their *eros*

from being directed back to the divine and to the knowledge that they represent, and thus philosophy, in this account, is substituted by love for the other.

Aristophanes' account puts forth an ontological status for individuals that is essentially bleak and tragic as we understand it, yet comical in the Greek perspective of the restoration of order from disruption. This account puts into perspective the entire question of *eros* and beauty. Hyland explains Aristophanes' erotic account as producing a triadic occurrence: first, he points out that because of Zeus' decision, incompleteness now comes to represent the human ontological condition (36), as we are essentially devoid of half of our nature from the moment of division. Secondly, *eros* arises as the recognition of this incompleteness, that is, we, as human beings and because of our initial hubris, become erotic individuals, and this *eros* and the recognition of this lack becomes part of our nature. Thirdly, *eros* now becomes the desire to overcome our incompleteness; whereas before *eros* had divine ambitions, now it is truly focused on healing the wound imparted by the gods on our nature. Instead of human beings attempting to reach beyond their status and towards that of the divine, which they were able to do when they were 'complete' creatures, albeit with consequences, now the object of their *eros* is more fitting to their status as mortal and temporal beings, and does not extend beyond their capabilities. Diotima will in fact take up this point in her encomium, as she will provide the path of the correct ascent towards the divine, one that is not violent in nature and is in fact natural to us, as I will explain when I discuss Socrates' speech. Aristophanes thereby presents love that is not a god, but rather, the ontological situation of humanity: "*eros* is our human nature in our present condition" (Hyland 39); a situation that William Cobb explains "prepares" the reader "for the view that Socrates will report later" (68).

In this manner, not only do all ambitions stay within the sensible realm and directed towards corporeal interaction, but the tragic condition of human beings makes it so that after the first generation of half-humans, there are no original halves, and therefore "human life is thus striving after something at which we are fated by nature to fail" (Hyland 40). This tragic condition of humanity is what keeps individuals not only respecting the proper relationship to the gods - which is considered a happy ending by the standards of Aristophanes' comedy - but human beings are now constantly striving for a union, a harmony they once had and lost: a beautiful condition that they cannot replicate. Thus, in Aristophanes' account love is natural to all human beings, as it is essentially the desire for one's original nature, in addition to a reminder of the importance of piety and the proper relationship of human beings to the gods; since human beings are immersed in their physical search for their lost partner, their *eros* is no longer directed at the gods or divine power - or philosophy - but rather towards healing "the wound of human nature" (*Symposium* 191a). Love thereby assures piety and the proper relationship to the divine, as it directs *eros* away from the gods and towards one another, while ensuring that individuals respect the divine through the reminder of their 'original sin.'

Aristophanes' myth shows, in a way, the human fixation on the other, which emphasizes the search for beauty in the physical rather than in the spiritual domain. However, Aristophanes does emphasize the importance of the search for wisdom and the spiritual beginning in the particular, since it was when human beings were whole that they desired what transcended their physical world. In fact, in a way, the original unity in Aristophanes' speech is akin to Plato's recollection, since in their original state human beings were able to get as close to knowledge of the Forms as possible, that is, close to the divine. Thus, although Aristophanes' story provides a

dreary ontological and epistemological account, it does provide hope in that it presents the foundation for the quest for wisdom that Diotima will take up and complete.

From Aristophanes' classically comical ontological account, we move to Agathon's deficient epistemological account - at least, when analyzed according to Plato's line in the *Republic*, where in the hierarchy of knowledge *eikasia* (imagination) stands below *noesis* (understanding). Agathon, the poet who is being celebrated in this banquet gives his own praise of love, a praise that depicts *eros* as the Beautiful itself. It is no coincidence that Agathon, whose name literally means 'the good,' is also the most physically beautiful man in the room and the one that delivers the speech that praises love's goodness through its beautiful, external appearance. In fact, at this point, "beauty has taken a place at the center of the discussion of *eros*" (Hyland 27). The connection between *agathos* (good) and *kalos* (beauty) present in Agathon's speech highlights the view that external beauty, such as Agathon's physique, translates to internal goodness, which his name implies. This connection between external beauty and the good is juxtaposed to Socrates' internal beauty, the beauty of his soul. Additionally, it is juxtaposed to the latter's relationship to the good which Diotima takes up in her speech when she describes *eros* as the opposite of beautiful, yet always in the lookout for a beauty that is also good, as will be examined. Furthermore, Agathon's speech emphasizes the influential powers of beauty to encourage and to deceive the spectator, who can sometimes be prompted to disregard rationality in favour of desire for the beautiful object. This image of beauty's danger in relation to *eros*, present from Phaedrus' initial speech, is important in regards to philosophy, as fixation on physical beauty can stagnate the individual's intellectual progression, as will be investigated in Alcibiades' relationship to Socrates.

Agathon, the poet, delivers a speech that truly lives up to his poetic prowess, the only speech able to move the audience to spontaneous and energetic applause (next to that of Socrates, of course). Agathon focuses on appearance first and foremost, on form rather than content from the opening line: "I wish first to speak of how I ought to speak" (*Symposium* 195b). The portrayal that Agathon gives of *eros* focuses on the qualities that make love the most beautiful of the gods, attempting to prove love's goodness through a physical description meant to correlate directly to love's virtuous nature. Love is thus described as a beautiful youth, delicate and of soft character, with a gentle shape, whose "graceful good looks *prove* that he is balanced and fluid in his nature" (*Symposium* 196a, my emphasis). Agathon's insistence on equating the description of *eros*' form (graceful good looks) with that of his substance and temperament (balanced and fluid in nature) emphasizes the problem of equating beauty with goodness and truth, and of letting one's *eros* be directed towards beautiful forms as opposed to beautiful contents. Agathon does not really give proof that *eros'* gentleness and beauty in his physical form translate to a gentle and balanced nature. Even though Agathon, for example, is renowned for his beauty and also appears to be an excellent host and gentle individual, not only are his physical attributes not responsible for his temperament and personality, but other famously good looking individuals, such as Alcibiades, possess fiery and willful temperaments that do not seem to correlate with their *kalos* physique. Furthermore, Socrates would be the perfect example of the exact opposite: an individual whose external attributes are not considered as beautiful, but who is renowned for possessing a balanced, almost supra-human nature. Agathon's first statement of a beautiful exterior as the cause for a beautiful interior is not only his first fallacious statement, but the first indication that he is molding *eros* after his own image, and effectively setting himself forth as the god of love whom he is praising.

Accordingly, Agathon moves on to discuss the moral character of love, describing the four cardinal virtues which he claims *eros* possesses, but slightly changing their definition, or overlooking logic in his own words. For example, in stating that love is just, Agathon simply equates justice to non-violence, stating that "violence never touches Love" (*Symposium* 196c) in the form of injustice; however, he does not explain exactly why non-violence makes *eros* just, either in judgment or behaviour, or how love partakes in justice in the first place. Agathon also states that *eros* has the "biggest share of moderation" (*Symposium* 196c), as he is able to control one's desires, yet equates moderation with power, which seems contradictory as Agathon states that "moderation, by common agreement, is power over pleasures and passions, and no pleasure is more powerful than love!" (*Symposium* 196c). The contradiction lies in the fact that Agathon is stating that *eros* possesses moderation over *eros* itself, yet states that moderation is power over pleasures and that *eros* itself is the most powerful pleasure there is; in other words, not only does *eros* possess moderation, which implies a control over desire, but its desire is also the most powerful there is, implying that it would be hard to moderate in the first place. Even though Agathon is describing love as what is most transcendent, he fails in his explanation, which indicates that his words are used more for stylistic effects than as logical pieces of his argument.

Furthermore, the poet goes on to say that "because Love has power over the bravest of the others, he is bravest of them all" (*Symposium* 196), presenting bravery as a sort of advantage over others, very reminiscent of Thrasymachus' definition of justice in the *Republic* as the advantage of the strong over the weak. Moreover, when stating that *eros* is wise Agathon talks about skill, *techne*, describing love as being good at "artistic production" (*Symposium* 196e) and emphasizing *eros*' *techne* as a poet. Even though Diotima will elaborate on the idea that *eros* moves the individual to production and creation, which is an important aspect of *eros*'

connection to the Beautiful, Agathon is mistaken in his terminology, and confuses practical skill with wisdom. In addition, in emphasizing *eros*' skill as a poet, Agathon emphasizes further the beauty of the form of his speech, the image that he is producing of love, which ultimately, like poetry, Plato would advise to take as *eikasia,* an image: Agathon's description sounds beautiful in form, but in a somewhat deceiving manner, as the content is rather empty and plagued with logical inconsistencies, as shown.

In fact, it is only the beautiful image that he delivers of love that moves his audience to applause, much like Agathon's own beauty. The prowess of Agathon's poetic delivery is shown when he is "suddenly struck by a need to say something in poetic meter" (*Symposium* 197d), just as he states that in the presence of love, all individuals become poets, a dramatic effect cleverly included to embellish his own poetic account and that in fact, is successful, as the audience is wooed by the superficial beauty of his speech: "when Agathon finished, Aristodemus said, everyone there burst into applause, so becoming to himself and to the god did they think the young man's speech" (*Symposium* 198a). Agathon's speech is the most powerful in emotional effect - and by powerful I mean the most effective in inducing an emotional response from the audience - because it brings the most influential image or representation of love yet, that of *eros* as that which is the most beautiful, and because of this external beauty, the best of the gods, the good itself. The power of beauty to inspire and to mislead is most evident in Agathon's speech, wherein a somewhat superficial image of beauty brings the audience to an emotional outburst.[5] The influential power of beauty can be catastrophic when mixed with the powerful forces of love. As we saw in Phaedrus' encomium, love can lead to a complete disregard of rationality in favour of desire, which in turn can have catastrophic consequences for the individual and his

5. The counter image is that of the beauty of the soul enchanting the individual into submission, as will be evident in Alcibiades' description of his love for Socrates nearing the end of the dialogue.

community. Beauty, with its power to inspire, can wrap up the individual entirely and arguably more powerfully than any other object of love. In addition, Agathon is making the mistake of thinking of love itself as the Beautiful itself, which is a statement that Diotima takes up and corrects by showing that it is not *eros* that is beautiful, but rather its object.

In a sense, Agathon's beauty and the beauty of his words resemble the beauty of Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, a beauty powerful enough to convince individuals of one's inherent goodness and the goodness of one's *logos*. Even though Agathon is suggesting that *eros* is best because of his moral virtues in addition to his appearance, thus hinting at a more complete account of the beautiful (one that partakes in both soul and body), his speech still emphasizes the importance of form over content, external beauty somewhat producing spiritual virtue solely by being beautiful. Socrates is quick to point out this contradiction, as he states "in my foolishness, I thought you should tell the truth about whatever you praise, that this should be your basis and that from this a speaker should select the most beautiful truths and arrange them most suitably" (*Symposium* 198e); that is, Socrates states that the truth must come first when describing a subject, and with a true description beauty will follow, as opposed to praising what is beautiful and assuming that, because there is beauty, there will also be truth. This misconception was already present in Agathon's own account of *eros* that presumes that virtue follows from physical beauty, yet he provides no actual evidence for this connection. Socrates thus states that, on the contrary, what is beautiful will be beautiful because it is true, as will be seen in the examination of Diotima's speech.

The discussion has now progressed to the point where *eros* is seen in relation to what is beautiful, and also to what is true. Beauty was first introduced by Pausanias with his distinction of the Common and Heavenly Aphrodites, and now it is beauty that becomes the most important

attribute of Love. As shown so far, *eros* is highly attracted to particular individuals in both body and soul, although it is mainly attracted to the physical appearance of a person, and the desire that *eros* exerts is felt simultaneously in a corporeal and non-corporeal manner. Furthermore, *eros* is inextricably related to Aphrodite because it is assumed to be beautiful, and most times also viewed as being inherently good because of its beauty. It is now Socrates' turn to give his own speech, an account he learned from the priestess Diotima, who he states taught him "the art of love" (*Symposium* 201d). Diotima's account will introduce *eros* not as the Beautiful, as it was described in Agathon's account, or as exclusive *eros* for the other who is also the self, as in Aristophanes' account, but, taking from both, she describes *eros* as desiring what is truly beautiful and starting in the particular beauty present in the empirical world, the beauty of the other. This beauty is the beauty capable of moving the individual to the beauty of the form of the Beautiful Itself.

In fact, "Socrates will in a decisive way accept the core of Aristophanes' position as part of the 'truth' about *eros* that he will 'teach'" (Hyland 41); and I would argue that he does the same with Agathon's account, since both accounts are present in Diotima's description. Socrates' first statement breaks from the binary position that has been assigned to *eros* from the opening speech, which attempted to place *eros* on one side of the human-divine matrix. In Phaedrus' speech, *eros* is seen as a movement from one human being to another, entirely focused on particularity, as the effects are felt only on the individual level. This emphasis on particularity, whereby human *eros* is separated from the divine realm, is mentioned in Pausanias' speech, although Pausanias places it in a hierarchy that further highlights the human-divine binary, according to which *eros* aimed at the physical is placed on a lower position than the *eros* which is aimed at what is non-corporeal is placed. Eryximachus, although somewhat encompassing

both aspects in his universalization of the forces of love, still maintains it on the human side, as he assigns a human vessel to control the effects of *eros* so as to achieve balance. In Aristophanes' speech *eros* is even redirected from the divine realm in a very real attempt by the divine to keep human *eros* away from what is transcendent and direct it back into temporality. Conversely, Agathon's speech places *eros* entirely in the divine realm – there is no unison or harmony between both. Now, Socrates will break from this binary position through the introduction of a mediatory element, a third realm of sorts that exists to remedy the separation between Agathon's absolutely divine account and Aristophanes' absolutely human position.

Socrates therefore states that love is neither part of the divine realm nor the human realm, but rather it is a "great spirit" (*Symposium* 202e), a *daimon* that exists between both worlds acting as a messenger that keeps both worlds separated yet able to somewhat partake in one another without mixture, "conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men [it] bring commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices" (*Symposium* 202e). From this opening statement Socrates touches upon the concern for piety and the proper relationship to the divine that is a focus of Aristophanes' myth, since the *daimon* ensures that there is some sort of reciprocity between gods and humans. In addition, Socrates' *daimonic eros* provides the harmony and balance that Eryximachus attributes to love: "they round out the whole and bind fast to the all" (*Symposium* 202e), while simultaneously providing the connection between particular beauty to what is beautiful that will be so important for Diotima's encomium.

Diotima describes love as the product of *Poros* and *Penia,* resource and poverty respectively, a less glamorous description than the ones previously provided by Phaedrus and Agathon. *Eros* gets love of wisdom from the paternal side, and toughness from the maternal side, but no moderation from either in regards to beauty (Strauss 193); this lack of moderation is no

accident, as *eros* of what is truly beautiful would require no moderation, but rather complete devotion. As a child of resource and poverty, love is “always poor, and he’s far from being delicate and beautiful,” but rather, by nature, a lover of what is both beautiful and good, “a lover of wisdom” (*Symposium* 203d). Love thus desires both the Beautiful and the Good in equal measure: “he is in love with what is beautiful, and wisdom is extremely beautiful” (*Symposium* 204b). This is the first signal that love is a philosopher, since it desires wisdom. In addition, this is also the first explicit association between the Beautiful and wisdom, which will later be important as Diotima’s ladder describes a progression to the Forms via beauty. Love is thus a lover of beautiful things, and Diotima explains that what love wants in desiring beautiful things is for them to “become his own” (*Symposium* 204e); that is, love desires to possess beauty, and the reason behind this desire is that the possession of beautiful things will bring happiness to the lover. As Diotima explains, this desire is “common to all” (*Symposium* 205a), which is important as it emphasizes the accessibility of philosophy via the beautiful as all human beings are lovers of beauty. In the same manner, Diotima explains that any desire we have for good things is in fact our desire for what is entirely good, even when we go about it in ways that are not appropriate.

Up to this point then, *eros* is seen as the opposite of what it was in Agathon’s account: it is not beautiful, but rather desires what is beautiful, and like Aristophanes’ humans it is aware of its lack and thus desires to fix his position. *Eros* is in a state of lack yet aware of that lack, and is composed in a paradoxical way that echoes the theory of recollection, as it both has desire for the object, yet does not possess what it desires, because otherwise it would not desire it, as we can only desire what we lack. In this manner, *eros*’ intermediary position is emphasized, as it is somehow able to mediate between opposites to find harmony between both, like in Eryximachus’

speech. Since *eros* by nature lacks, it is in a state of being aware of what it misses, which is the first stage in the search for wisdom and out of *aporia*; the recognition that one is ignorant and lacks knowledge. This same recognition is present in the *Meno*, wherein Socrates conveys to his interlocutor how hard it is to obtain enough knowledge of objects so as to define them and consequently teach what things are. As a result of his discussion with Socrates Meno is reduced, openly and admittedly, to *aporia* (*Meno* 80a-b). It is at this point where Socrates begins the philosophical inquiry that culminates in his explanation of the theory of recollection. This presence in absence, the integral recognition of ignorance in *aporia*, is crucial for the philosophical endeavor to begin.

Already at this stage the resemblance of *eros* to Socrates himself is present, who is also an individual who does not possess much physical beauty but who is the biggest lover of wisdom and beauty there is. Furthermore, Socrates is more aware than anyone of his ignorance. Love, as a lover of wisdom, must be "in between being wise and being ignorant" (*Symposium* 204b), thus not possessing any of the extreme qualities that were attributed to him in the previous speeches; *eros* does not partake in absolutes, but is rather in a process of becoming, like human beings. Socrates' statement that he only knows that he does not know emphasizes both his wisdom and lack of wisdom; on one part, he is aware of his ignorance in a way that allows him to search for wisdom, to engage in dialectic and philosophical inquiry with others in the hopes of arriving at some sort of knowledge. On the other hand, his acknowledgment that he in fact does not have knowledge is what constitutes his wisdom, as this recognition is potentially what an individual needs in order to begin any philosophical journey.[6] As such, Socrates resembles *eros*, an entity

6. See *Apology* 21d and 23a-b.

that lacks but is aware of this lack so that it is able to long for what is missing to remediate this absence.

Diotima then explains the problem when human beings seek to remedy this absence by looking in the wrong places. She mentions Aristophanes' myth, indicating that the problem with his account is that individuals should only seek their half if their half is indeed good. As I have mentioned, the problem with Aristophanes' account is its upward blindness; that is, the account excludes the transcendent, and thus the realm of the Forms and actual knowledge, as it is only focused on the particular other. In this account, philosophy, and the ladder of love, is ultimately impossible. Human beings thus must desire the Good as the ultimate end, since *eros* is "wanting to possess the good forever" (*Symposium* 206a), wherein the good is the desired end, what is completely beautiful and good. In addition, Diotima states that the actual goal in wanting to possess the good forever is to give "birth in beauty, whether in body or in soul" (*Symposium* 206b). As focused as this account is on the movement towards the form of beauty itself, Diotima does not forego the physical and undeniable aspect of love's attraction presented in the previous speeches - and that Pausanias, to some extent, tried to make out to be vulgar - but rather incorporates both. Diotima explains that human beings can only give birth in what is beautiful, since she describes these creations as "godly affair[s]" (*Symposium* 206c). At this point, Diotima will include physical and intellectual offspring in her account of what it means to give birth in the Beautiful, and unlike Pausanias' rejection of the corporeal for the intellectual, she will explain that there are many different kinds of ways to give birth in beauty, and all are good because they are beautiful.

Human beings love the good and the beautiful, as we have examined, and indeed desire to possess it but the desire to possess the beautiful must begin in the way that is most immediate

to our human nature, which is via physical desire first, to then progress to a desire towards what is less corporeal. In addition, Diotima mentions harmony, as she states that no birth in the beautiful can occur when the individual is not in harmony with the divine, which emphasizes the idea that beauty is in harmony with what is divine, and not *eros* in itself as Eryximachus argues. Through giving birth in the beautiful, human beings are released “from their great pain” (*Symposium* 206e), from the pangs of childbirth, and it is love that longs for this release.

Eros is in fact directed towards immortality itself (*Symposium* 207a), and immortality is precisely what the act of giving birth in beauty is trying to achieve: “pregnancy, reproduction – this is an immortal thing for a mortal animal to do” (*Symposium* 206d). The suggestion that human beings desire what goes beyond their mortal limitations is already present in Aristophanes’ speech, which mentions that human beings’ long for their more divine and complete original nature, a nature that is denied to them and replaced with a self-healing *eros*. However, in Aristophanes’ account the solution is violent: human beings gather forces and attempt to overthrow the gods, which has disastrous consequences. In this case, the ascent is not only smooth, but accessible, as giving birth in beauty occurs in several ways that suit different kinds of individuals. By nature, immortality eludes us, as we are in a constant state of flux. Precisely because we are in flux is why giving birth in beauty is a viable option for immortality, as it allows us to leave behind something of us for posterity. In addition, Diotima already explained that we desire to possess the good because we desire happiness, and the only durable happiness we can achieve is that which lies in the transcendent realm, as happiness in this world is bound by the same laws of change to which our nature is bound. Diotima thus offers three kinds of immortality that human beings can achieve. The first, for those individuals who are “pregnant in body” (*Symposium* 208e) will be to reproduce physically, that is, to have human

offspring. The second, for those individuals who are more pregnant in soul, is to beget "wisdom and the rest of virtue" (*Symposium* 209a), that is, not *only* philosophy, but poetry and all of the creative arts. Diotima includes here the proper running of cities and the proper management of the household as ways in which wisdom manifests itself from individuals who experience the pregnancy of the soul. This kind of immortality thus has more to do with the fame that can be achieved within a community. The last kind of immortality is the cultivation of virtue, the desire for knowledge of what can truly be known, and because of its proximity to the transcendent can provide the individual with the most lasting form of immortality.

Diotima thus begins the encomium of *eros* in the corporeal to then take it into the world of Forms, as she describes a progression of love from the initial attraction to particular individuals, that moves 'up' to the form of beauty itself; from the realm of becoming to the world of being *qua* being. The importance of the physical is present in that the beginning of this progression is in the beauty of bodies, the place where the lover is meant to "beget beautiful ideas" (*Symposium* 201a); *logos* and the physical are already intertwined at this point. The theory is that through the love of particular beauty, in the form of one's beloved, one should progress towards love of the Beautiful itself, by first understanding that "the beauty of any one body is brother to the beauty of any one" (*Symposium* 210b), and thus, the beauty found in a particular body is shared by all beautiful bodies. Here, Diotima is suggesting that through the love of the particular the individual can discover the universal, which is vital for the ladder of love to work at all. In loving a particular other, in this case a specific person, the lover is able to recognize that the beauty of his beloved is a beauty that is present not just in that person, but that belongs to a universal category. Perhaps it should not be viewed as the literal understanding that from the love of one body the lover loves *all* bodies, but that the love of one body allows the lover to

recognize that there is a universal and more transcendent beauty which this particular manifestation of the beautiful partakes. For example, an individual who appreciates the beauty in breakdancing can at first be led to disregard the beauty in other dance styles, as these styles might appear opposed or even contrary to the style that he loves. However, the more he explores this love for a particular style the more he finds out the roots of it, and the similarities to other dance styles, to the extent that he begins to appreciate similar styles, such as hip hop, and ultimately completely dissimilar styles, such as ballet or jazz, because he understands that the underlying beauty in all is that they are all dance and that all styles intersect and influence each other. The lover, from the love of an exclusively particular activity, begins to appreciate other exclusively particular activities because he now recognizes the universal beauty that encompasses them all, in addition to recognizing that particular beauty is not entirely exclusive.

Once the lover is a lover of all beautiful bodies then he is able to realize that "the beauty of people's souls is more valuable than the beauty of their bodies" (*Symposium* 210b), making a decisive leap from the purely corporeal to the non-empirical. However, it is important to note that the corporeal is always attached to the empirical; as Strauss states: "we never love merely the soul. *Eros* can never be divorced from body. We cannot love a human being without loving his head" (241). Diotima's account takes up this condition and does not reject it, but uses it as part of the movement towards the Beautiful Itself. Furthermore, the revelation of the Beautiful at the end of the ladder in fact leads the lover *back* to the many particularities, leads him or her back to the cave. In fact, Alcibiades' entrance will shed light on both sides of the love of the particular, its positive side that leads us on the journey upwards, and the attraction that can stagnate us in the beginning steps.

Now we are moved to the beauty of souls which begets the "beauty of activities and laws" (*Symposium* 210c). It is here when abstract beauty, such as the beauty of wisdom, becomes more explicit and is portrayed as a consequence of the appreciation of physical beauty. From corporeal beauty the lover moves up the ladder towards the beauty of *logos* and philosophy, which is more abstract but still beautiful for the lover to be engaged in it. The lover is now attracted to a multiplicity of knowledge, the "great sea of beauty" (*Symposium* 210d) that provides inspiration for the production of beautiful ideas, that is, to engage with wisdom until eventually he is able to see wisdom for what it is in its complete form that also happens to be what is truly beautiful (*Symposium* 210e). Diotima describes this stage as the "goal of loving" (*Symposium* 210e), the progression from particular beauty to the true beauty of wisdom. In this manner, it is the philosopher himself, the original lover of wisdom and master of *ta erotika*, who is described as the ideal lover, the one who understands the proper order and the correct progression that love must take in order to achieve the good, just like the physician was attributed with this power in regards to the body in Eryximachus' speech.

The language of eroticism surrounding the relationship between individuals and knowledge is also seen in the *Republic*, in which the individual is depicted as having an erotic relationship with wisdom. Socrates states that as the real lover of wisdom moves up the line, "he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it" and once he reaches the top he goes on to have "intercourse with it [the Form]and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and – at that point, but not before – is relieved from the pains of giving birth" (*Republic* 490a-c). The language of the ascent up the line, where the object of *eros* is wisdom, is the same language used in the ascent up the ladder of the lover towards the Beautiful. As

Socrates states in this extract from the *Republic*, the real lover of learning has an erotic relationship to wisdom: the true philosopher has intercourse with wisdom, that is, she engages with wisdom with *all* parts of her soul and not just her rational capacity, and thus is able to "beget" knowledge, or in the language of the *Symposium*, give birth in beauty. Erotic love is what is necessary to begin the ascent up the ladder or the line in the first place; for the ladder, it is necessary for the individual to desire the particular individual, while in the line it is necessary to desire the movement up even when it begins in *eikasia.* In fact, both the ladder and the line begin in levels that dwell with particularity, and thus, desire is the faculty of the soul that is the most engaged, as it is our strongest element in the empirical realm. Furthermore, since giving birth in beauty is the goal, the language evokes the act of reproduction which requires passionate love, *eros* as opposed to *philia* (affectionate regard or friendship). The idea is for the lover to be engaged completely in the progression, and this can only occur with the strongest kind of love.

However, as much as the attainment of beauty itself is the goal, beauty in the empirical world is not disregarded, as it is through beautiful things that the lover learns to love the Beautiful itself, "using them like rising stairs" (*Symposium* 211c) towards the ultimate goal. In fact, erotic love should not lessen as the individual moves up the ladder, but rather it should increase as it increasingly becomes focused on the universal, on the Beautiful Itself. In addition, the point of climbing the ladder is not contemplation of the Beautiful Itself, but to be able to move into action; that is, into producing beauty with this knowledge. It is only at this point when one is able to "give birth to true beauty" (*Symposium* 212a), to act in a very human way by the dictates of what is truly beautiful. As Diotima tells Socrates, when the lover "looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen – only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he's in touch with no images) but to true virtue (because he is in

touch with the true Beauty" (*Symposium* 212a).The point of beholding beauty, then, is to bring this beauty back to the sensible, to the particular, and not to disregard it, but rather to use it as a starting place for creation inspired by the Beautiful Itself. With this newfound *noesis* lovers can create particular beauty that allows other individuals and their *eros* to become engaged in the ladder so as to embark on the same journey towards the Beautiful. The lover pregnant in soul will come back to give birth in that kind of beauty, creating intellectual offspring, such as books or philosophical treatises, or artistic productions, whereas the lover pregnant in body comes back to give birth to physical offspring, to children. In either case, the ladder necessitates a return to the particular, since once the lover reaches the top, the particular that is used at the beginning is now incorporated into the end of the journey.

Moreover, creation in the beautiful can only occur in the particular. In the world of the Forms, there is no creation because there is no flux, everything is in a state of completion and absoluteness, where decay and change do not even appear as variables as they do not exist in this realm. Creation cannot occur as all Forms are sempiternal, always present and never decaying. The lover, therefore, is prompted to come back to the physical, where creation is constantly taking place, in order to give birth inspired by what is eternal, so that these creations are no longer merely *eikasia*, but reproductions that have in mind the newfound *noesis* of the eternal. In this manner, beauty generates more beauty, moving individuals to the universal source to then be able to create in particularity, so that through particularity they can be lead back to the source, and so on.

Diotima's account of *eros*, delivered in the words of Socrates, does not reject the previous eulogies to love, but rather amalgamates them under one Platonic explanation of the nature of our erotic desire. Diotima incorporates a key aspect of each speech that culminates in

her description of the lover as the philosopher, the individual who moves from the mutable particular to the immutable universal. From Phaedrus and Aristophanes' encomiums, Diotima takes up the importance of the relationship to a particular beloved, which she turns into the foundational step for the attainment of the Beautiful. Instead of making the devotion to the finite other an end in itself, as it is in Aristophanes, Diotima makes it part of a system, of the ladder of love, so that now the particular beauty of the beloved is representative of the universal beauty of the Beautiful, and it is via our particular experience that we are able to access this knowledge. Aristophanes' account, which presents problems for philosophy as it centers on a horizontal correspondence of desire, is corrected by incorporating this fixation for the other and making it part of the epistemological progression towards the Beautiful. This correction is also present in Eryximachus' account, wherein it is argued that desires must be properly balanced rather than eliminated. In this manner, Diotima remedies the flaw of human nature present in Aristophanes' ontological account of humanity, so that the human ontological status is no longer an impediment for its epistemological progression.

Furthermore, Diotima takes Pausanias and Agathon's mention of Aphrodite to the next level explaining that *eros* in fact lacks beauty and for this reason longs after it constantly. In his encomium Pausanias is the first one to make the Beautiful the object of *eros*, as he states that love partakes in either the Common or Heavenly Aphrodite. However, Pausanias hierarchizes this distinction in order to elevate the spiritual over the physical, to the extent that the physical is regarded as low and thus not conducive to the attainment of virtue. Diotima, on the other hand, incorporates the physical requirement of the erotic experience of the beautiful as foundational, since that is the place where erotic desire begins on an individual level. Moreover, Diotima incorporates Agathon's insistence on the Beautiful's association to *eros* but elevates it to the

ultimate object of our desire, so that *eros* itself is no longer what possesses this metaphysical beauty, but rather this beauty is what *eros* longs to obtain. In this manner, Diotima emphasizes that the horizontal nature of Aristophanes' desire is incomplete, as human beings will not find the metaphysical beauty that they long for within the physical realm. Thus, the journey must be moved upwards, so that the particular experience of beauty serves as the starting point for this vertical progression.

In addition, Diotima explains that this longing is not merely physical, but also spiritual, incorporating Eryximachus' elevation of *eros* from the physical to the entire cosmos, without disregarding the emphasis on particularity present in Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Aristophanes. The desire for harmony present in Eryximachus' account is developed in Diotima's encomium, where harmony between the self and the divine occurs as the soul progresses up the line towards a greater understanding of the place of the Beautiful in the sensible. Ultimately, this understanding concludes in the awareness that the individual must go back to the physical to create in beauty that is not vacuous, or merely representative, but rather that incorporates the *noesis* of the Beautiful so that it can inspire other individuals to perform the same ascent.

Eros, in Diotima's account, ultimately explains the human ontological condition in a way that closely resembles that in Aristophanes' account: human beings lack *something*, in this case beauty, and their *eros* is the only element available for them to fix it. Socrates' speech thus provides a "proto-Hegelian *aufhebung*" (Hyland 43) of the speeches, a sublation of the speeches that takes in what is necessary and transforms it into a comprehensive Socratic account. *Eros* is neither divine nor human, but rather a *daimon* that allows connection between both; it is not beautiful, but rather longs after beauty because it lacks it, it is the drive that connects human beings to the metaphysical. *Eros* is neither entirely human nor divine; it is precisely an aspect of

our soul that partakes in both in order to bridge the gap between both realms. *Eros* is also not entirely spiritual or physical but since it is a fundamental aspect of our ontological status, it longs after the soul *and* the body, so that it does not reject the physical in the way Pausanias does, for example. On the contrary, *eros* is manifested in both physical and spiritual objects of desire, most times beginning in a particularized manifestation of beauty, such as another individual, in order then to move to a more abstract, less sensible, and thus, less human, object of love. In this sense, *eros* is a philosopher of sorts, as it begins its progression in the physical to then move to the metaphysical, from the lesser objects of knowledge to the more complete objects of comprehension. *Eros* is able to be attracted to beauty that transcends the physical, and that can produce knowledge, thus allowing the lover to transcend her human nature and be moved towards the transcendent realm where rational activity prevails.

2.4 *Eros* incarnate: the entrance of Alcibiades

At this point in the dialogue, when the description of *eros* has been finalized and solely demonstrated in language, is when Alcibiades appears to provide a specific and particular description of Socrates as *eros*, and a particular depiction of the experience of love. Up to this point Socrates has already been described as superhuman, and now, Alcibiades will demonstrate a human representation of *eros* in the form of the quintessential philosopher. Alcibiades' speech is different from the previous ones in that his words are influenced by his state of inebriation, as he is the only attendee who has been drinking heavily, and yet, he delivers a speech that seems more truthful than the ones presented before him. For Strauss, Alcibiades' praise of Socrates is 'poetic' in the sense that he uses similes, and in this manner his panegyric sheds "a new light on poetry" (261) that defends poetry as a source of truth. Alcibiades' '*in vino veritas*' eulogy is a kind of poetry that does not distort truth through its embellishment, but rather becomes more

effective in its portrayal.[7] As soon as he comes in, Alcibiades demands to see Agathon, the host of the banquet but coincidentally also the most beautiful man present. Agathon's external beauty demands so much attention that Alcibiades for a while does not realize that Socrates is seated next to him: "what with the ivy and all, he didn't see Socrates who had made room for him on the couch as soon as he saw him" (*Symposium* 213a). It is interesting that Socrates and Agathon are seated next to each other, since Socrates, while devoid of external beauty, arguably possesses beauty of the soul, and is juxtaposed to Agathon who in conjunction with his speech seems to be an empty image of what is beautiful and incorrectly, or at least illogically and without argument, believed to be good.

Even though it is the philosopher who is described as the ideal lover in Diotima's speech, Alcibiades' praise of Socrates depicts Socrates as possessing beauty itself and Alcibiades as the real lover of this beauty of the soul that is not immediately apparent to the eyes. For example, Alcibiades describes Socrates as possessing hypnotizing powers like those of Marsyas, only his abilities are stronger as he requires no instruments: "you do exactly what he does, but with words alone" (*Symposium* 215c). Socrates' hypnotizing power uses words and ideas, and as Alcibiades states, everyone who hears him is "transported" (*Symposium* 215d) through *logos*, even when the account is second-hand. The effect of Socrates on Alcibiades is intoxicating, as Alcibiades states that "if [he] were to describe for you what an extraordinary effect [Socrates'] words have always had on [him]... you might actually suspect [he] is still drunk" (*Symposium* 215e). Socrates' effect, like that of beauty, is powerful and unable to be explained rationally, but rather appeals directly to Alcibiades' more primal erotic desire.

7. In fact, according to Sarah Kofman, "for Plato wine is not a bad thing in itself, since it has the nature – and the ambiguity – of a *pharmakon;* consumed in moderation it is capable of softening souls and making them susceptible, as children are, to the truths embedded in fables" (24). In this case, wine is working to bring the truth out of Alcibiades' fantastic account of his relationship with Socrates.

Furthermore, Alcibiades states that Socrates forces him to examine his own life, making him believe "that [his] life isn't worth living" (*Symposium* 216a) and instilling in him a sense of shame (*Symposium* 216b) - like in Phaedrus' speech where the effects of love produce shame and encourage virtue in the lover. In fact, Alcibiades' sense of shame works in a very similar way to the motivations of Phaedrus' love militia, as it is only in the presence of Socrates when Alcibiades experiences this shame and this motivation for virtue, like the lovers in battle who would accomplish daring feats in order to impress their beloveds. Alcibiades, however, also describes Socrates as beauty itself, as he states that once he caught a "glimpse of the figures he keeps hidden within...so godlike- so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing" (*Symposium* 217a). He no longer had a choice whether to follow him or not, since he was mesmerized and his subservience was commanded. This description is similar to that of the lover upon seeing the Beautiful. In this manner, both Diotima's ideal lover and Alcibiades are "struck and bitten by philosophy" (*Symposium* 218a), the former upon glimpsing the Beautiful itself, and the latter through his relationship with Socrates. Alcibiades thus is able to appreciate the beauty in Socrates that is not evident to the eye but that is more substantial and conducive to virtue, as it foments rational activity: "[Soc]: if I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you can see in me a beauty that is really beyond description and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison" (*Symposium* 218e).

Next to the real beauty of the soul, physical beauty loses its immediate grip; this perceptual change is seen in the progression the lover takes from particular beauty of bodies to the beauty of the soul. Socrates in Alcibiades' account is described both as *eros* and as the Beautiful, and Alcibiades, unknowingly, describes himself as the true lover, the one who longs for what is truly beautiful and not just physically attractive, thus showing a partial understanding

of his lack: he is aware he is missing something but it is only when Socrates is around that this lack is manifested and turned into action. On the other hand, Socrates is presented as being in complete control of himself, as the lover who has already glimpsed the Beautiful and has gone back down the ladder with this *noesis* of the Forms, to the point that beautiful particulars no longer instill in him a licentious desire. However, in his account, Alcibiades demonstrates the confusion that Agathon already displayed at the beginning of the dialogue, as he desires to obtain Socrates' wisdom through physical contact when it is in fact through philosophy that this must be achieved; indeed, this is the problem with his own understanding of his ignorance, since Socrates' beauty does not 'shine' as intensely as physical beauty does, it is easier for him to ignore it, a problem with sensible beauty that will be examined in the next chapter.

2.5 *Eros*, the remedy for *aporia* and the human condition

Eros, described as a *daimon* and personified as a human being – Socrates – sheds light on the human condition. It indicates that individuals, through their erotic nature and the object of their love, are able to act in both the mortal and the divine spheres, partaking in both being and non-being. *Eros*, like human beings, is in a constant state of becoming; it is potentiality longing to be actualized. As such, it is capable of moving higher up the line toward what is true, going back and forth between *eikasia* and *noesis,* yet insofar as it is a *human* condition, it is unable to partake fully in either. Love, thus, acts as the remedy to the flaw of human nature pointed out in Aristophanes' encomium, allowing us to heal our innate state of ignorance and lack. The ontological condition of man as delineated in Aristophanes' story and taken up in Diotima's description sets up this flaw in human nature in an accurately Platonic way: "love of the beautiful equals lack of beauty; beauty equals good; therefore that which loves beauty is characterized by absence of beauty, which equals absence of good" (Strauss 182). For Socrates, "the beauty [of

the human situation] will be intimately tied to our *eros*" (Hyland 41) because it is precisely due to this inadequacy that human beings are erotic creatures. *Eros* is not good in itself, but good in what it longs after. The positive thing about *eros* is that it acts as the remedy for *aporia*; it is the recognition that all we know is that we know nothing, and instead of resting on this truth we seek to fix it. Philosophy, indeed, requires a "suffering of *aporia*, of recognizing that we do not know and of striving for knowledge" (Hyland 117) in order to commence at all.

Reaching *aporia* is the crucial condition for any philosophical inquiry.[8] Without it, we might fall into dogmatism – such as Pausanias' sophistic relativism - or dogmatic scepticism. In the most philosophical sense, "those who allow their ignorance to propel them to seek wisdom are truly the lovers of wisdom" (Scott & Welton 98): awareness of one's own ignorance is key for action. Socrates and the *daimon eros*, who both know that they lack wisdom and beauty respectively, are the true lovers whose awareness of their shortcomings propels them towards knowledge. Socratic ignorance, for example, in fact requires a degree of scepticism that allows the individual to understand her state of ignorance. Not coincidentally, Socrates begins his erotic education in the realization that he in fact knows nothing about love (*Symposium* 201e). As Socrates tells his audience, he reaches this conclusion after Diotima questions him regarding his beliefs about love, so that Socrates reaches the conclusion, through dialogue with Diotima, that he is in fact mistaken about his assumptions: "I had told her almost the same things that Agathon told me just now: that Love is a great god and that he belongs to beautiful things. And she used the very same arguments against me that I used against Agathon" (*Symposium* 201e). *Aporia*, hence, must be induced in order for the individual to achieve the state of 'positive' ignorance, a

8. In *Seventh Letter* section 342a1-d8 Plato explicitly discusses this procedure.

situation that Socrates is seen trying to bring forth through dialectic, an examination that moves the individual from awareness of ignorance to a desire to fix it.

Thus, in between wisdom and ignorance there is philosophy, the search for wisdom that begins in the ignited *eros* for what is beautiful because it is good, but also of what is sensibly beautiful because it leads, like in Diotima's ladder, to the understanding of more complete accounts of beauty. Diotima's ladder is therefore where "the reader finds the union of the divine and the mortal through the *daimonic* power of Love" (Cobb 76). The gods do not require this ignition because they are ontologically complete: the gods do not require *eros* because they do not require *logos*, their state is one of sempiternal completion. *Logos* becomes a purely human phenomenon, "somehow a function of our morality, the incompleteness of our noetic visions - or, one might say in anticipation, of our *eros*" (Hyland 77). Love, then, is "not perfection, it is the energy toward perfection, not divinity but our longing for it" (Gould 45); therefore, because we cannot have it, we cannot be truly beautiful, we not only desire beauty but want to create in beauty in lieu of possessing it. Thus, "the ascent of the staircase does not lead one out of this world" (Cobb 79) as many believe Diotima argues and Plato is criticized for; on the contrary, the top is reached through dialectic and once reached the end is action, since once one reaches understanding one is able to come back to the practical realm of society and human relations with the correct approach.

As such, *eros* transcends the definition given to it in the *Republic* that mainly refers to appetitive and 'unphilosophical' desires; now, *eros* is what gives motion to the entire soul: *thumos* (spiritedness), *logos* (reason) and *epithumia* (desire) in unison, the combination of elements that drive the soul towards action. To understand better the role of *eros*, it is useful to examine briefly its description in the *Phaedrus*, wherein *eros* is depicted as the principle for

action for the entire soul. The discussion about the nature of the soul in the *Phaedrus* reveals an all-encompassing aspect of *eros* that is missing from other Platonic accounts. The image that Socrates uses for the soul, that of the charioteer and the two horses, explains the intricate but necessary reciprocity between our rational and erotic faculties.

In the image of the charioteer, the individual is in charge of leading two horses with opposite behaviours; the black horse represents those appetitive desires that seek purely physical gratification, whereas the white horse represents rational activity that stands above the phenomenal (*Phaedrus* 253e-254d). These two elements represent *epithumia* (desire, passionate longing) and *nous* (mind, reason) respectively. *Epithumia* takes over the concept of *eros* as appetite in order to mark a fundamental distinction between both: *eros* is what drives the soul, the motion of *nous*, *thumos*, and *epithumia* in its entirety and in harmony, "the very self-motion of the soul… the being and *logos* of the soul" (Hyland 81). The negative aspects traditionally associated with desire that make it incompatible with philosophical endeavours – as physical contingencies can sometimes disrupt rational activity - will no longer be present, since now *eros* is what *drives* the entire soul towards its object, and *epithumia* is relegated to "*one constituent* of the soul" (Hyland 75). *Eros* is thus represented as more than an isolated activity of the soul, but as an activity of the soul that is in fact necessary for philosophy, as it drives the white horse, pure *kalos te kai agathos* through philosophical inquiry.

In this manner, both aspects of the soul can work in unison, complementing each other in a way that suits our dual human nature more appropriately. The white horse, embodying pure rationality, balances the passionate appetitive desires of the black horse, whose desire must be reined in for philosophy to occur; for example, Alcibiades' reaction to Socrates, as described by Alcibiades, is similar to the reaction of the charioteer at the sight of the beautiful boy in the

chariot analogy. Alcibiades lusts after Socrates in a purely physical manner, although desiring his soul, and Socrates does not give in to his desires. The black horse in this account is "not inherently evil, but can be a force for good if he is properly trained" (Belfiore 253), that is, with the restriction provided by reason, the most dangerous aspects of those desires can be curbed, and that energy towards action can be used for good. Simultaneously, the black horse humanizes the purely rational aspect of the soul, and since it is the one initiating movement, it is fundamental for any kind of philosophical inquiry; as Belfiore explains, both the charioteer myth and Diotima's ladder of love convey "the general principle that desire, *eran* or *philein*, is a necessary condition for seeking wisdom" (201). Working in unison, both are capable of leading the soul in a harmonious manner. However, it is the job of the charioteer to ensure that this harmony prevails, using will and spirit to guide each aspect of the soul towards its proper end. If this harmony prevails, the soul can entirely desire the Good and successfully embark on this progression; as Alessandra Fussi states: "in Plato's *Symposium*, *eros* unifies the multiplicity of human goals by drawing the entire soul towards the desire for the good" (237).

The desire for beauty that the lover experiences is thus brought together in a definite manner with the philosophical endeavor of the lover of wisdom. The philosopher, like *eros*, longs for what is beautiful because of an awareness of her own lack of beauty. Plato's portrayal of the philosopher in dialogues such as the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, Diotima's account of *eros* as desirous of abstract and physical *kalos*, and Alcibiades' description of Socrates all suggest the idea that the philosopher is the true erotician - the most capable master of *ta erotika* and possessor of the noblest form of love, *eros* for the unchanging, permanent, being *qua* being. This image of the erotic lover of *sofia* is juxtaposed with the traditional portrayal of the philosopher: the individual who rejects *eros* in favor of rationality, and who is, unlike the poets, deeply un-

erotic. The claim about the philosopher's vast erotic ability is twofold: on one side, it refers to the direction of the philosopher and the lover's *eros*, that is, that both lover and philosopher have ultimately the same object of love. On the other hand, this claim refers to the analogous epistemological movement of the philosopher – as outlined in the *Republic* – and that of the lover, as described in the ladder of love.

2.6 The lover *qua* philosopher: the Beautiful and the Good as objects of Love

Now that we have come to the point where the lover is seen as embarking on the same progression as is the philosopher, both moving from the sensible towards the metaphysical, we can compare Socrates' account of philosophical progression via beauty in the *Symposium* with his account of philosophical progression in the *Republic.* Diotima's 'ladder of love' and the line & cave analogies in the *Republic* share an analogous movement. The line traces, ontologically and epistemologically, the movement from a lesser object of being and therefore knowledge, to the highest form of understanding and ontological status. This movement parallels the evolvement of *eros* in the ladder from the particular beauty of bodies to the form of the Beautiful itself. This similar progression will demonstrate the foundational role of beauty in the movement of love *and* of philosophical education, as both journeys trace the movement of philosophy, "appearing in the *Symposium* as Eros ascending various stages of insight to the vision of the Beautiful, in the *Republic* as mind ascending the stages of the Divided Line" (Notopoulos 58). In this manner, we will examine how the lover in Diotima's account transforms into a philoso-lover of sorts; that is, how the account present in the *Symposium* is a philosophical progression like the one present in the *Republic*, only the former is more accessible, as it deals with the experience of beauty and love that all human beings, regardless of rational inclinations, partake in.

Both journeys begin in the plane of images; the ladder in the appreciation of the beauty of a particular body, and the line analogy in the plane of *eikasia*, the realm of imagination and images in the visible section of the line. Both the ladder and the line begin in a stage where the individual can only come in contact with *reproductions* or emptier images of what truly is. In the ladder section, the beauty of a particular body partakes in the Beautiful itself but does not encompass it entirely, as it is not only the beauty of the corporeal that makes up what is beautiful. In the line, *eikasia* marks the foundational step towards understanding, whereby the individual can only come in contact with *images* of what truly is. As much as both of these stages stand at the lowest ontological and epistemological levels, that does not mean that they are despised by Plato or considered to be inadequate for the philosophical movement. On the contrary, without these stages there would be no movement at all, since it is through this very particular stage that human beings become engaged in the journey to begin with. It is at this stage of particularity that *eros* acts and drives the individual forward; otherwise, the individuals would not require the ladder at all, as they would just comprehend the Forms in an immediate manner. However, it is precisely our dichotomous nature, our dualism of body and soul that requires this beginning stage which is thus entirely fundamental.

From this foundational stage both the lover and the philosopher move to a plane of *pistis* (belief), which still refers to the physical, but just a step above *eikasia*. From the appreciation of the beauty in a particular body the lover is able to acknowledge that all bodies share beauty, having found one aspect of beauty that becomes apparent in all things. Similarly, the philosopher uses her perception of things in the material world to form her belief and from one thing finds connection to the other, which in the allegory of the line necessarily arises from imagination as a first step. Thus, in both the ladder and the line the lover and the philosopher move from a lower

object of knowledge towards a 'higher' or more complete object and belief; more complete because, according to Plato's epistemological movement, the higher up the line we go the more the particular things that we attempt to understand partake in universality. Thus, higher up the line we come closer to the absolute definition that is unaffected by flux, and consequently, possesses more stability. Stability is key for Plato's epistemological understanding, as the quality of thought will always depend on the quality of the object; hence, an object with greater stability allows the observer to have stable perception and more comprehension of the object he follows.

These lower stages, although lower, are by no means despicable or unnecessary, as they were the tool that provided both philosopher and lover with the belief that from a particular stage more complete understanding arises. According to this movement, when individuals begin their philosophical inquiry at the level of *eikasia*, they are "forced to investigate from hypotheses" (*Republic* 510b), as opposed to beginning their inquiries from pre-determined principles, since images are in the realm of imagination and not complete reality. However, once the individual moves towards the intelligible section of the line, she is able to understand the previous images "truly as hypotheses" (*Republic* 511b) as opposed to first principles, whereas before the images were taken to be the things in themselves. The same movement occurs in the lover who starts from appreciating the beauty of a particular individual as the manifestation of *all* beauty, to understanding that that particular manifestation of beauty follows from a more universal and comprehensive idea of the Beautiful. This foundational stage is thus able to work as "stepping stones to take off from, enabling [the individual] to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything" (*Republic* 511b). At this stage both the lover and the philosopher cross into the intelligible realm: an appreciation of the beauty of souls and *logos* for the lover, and a state of *dianoia* (capacity for discursive thinking) for the philosopher. The lover is now able to

appreciate discarnate beauty through a process of discursive thinking; whereas at the beginning the contact with beauty is immediate and requires no rationalization, at this stage the lover produces an appreciation for abstract beauty through her rational capacity. Similarly, the philosopher in the line analogy uses discursive thinking to arrive at abstract mathematical concepts and theoretical subjects that, although they may appear as not immediately 'beautiful,' are beautiful in their proximity to the Form of the Good, which is entirely beautiful in nature because it is entirely true.

This stage of discursive reasoning is juxtaposed to the next stage where understanding, as action, comes without process. At the stage of *noesis* in the line there is immediate apprehension: the philosopher does not need a process of discursive thought as she can now understand what is real, being *qua* being or the Good. The lover, in the same manner, reaches the stage of immediate apprehension of the Beautiful that requires no thinking. Not surprisingly, both the lover and the philosopher have reached the same stage, for one it is called apprehension of the form of the Beautiful, and for the other it is called apprehension of the form of the Good; for both, this final apprehension comes as a leap, "a flash of revelation" (Notopoulos 74). As A.E Taylor explains, "the place assigned to both (καλον and αγαθον) in the ascent to 'being and reality' is identical, and in both cases the stress is laid on the point that when the supreme 'form' is decried, its apprehension comes as a sudden "revelation"" (231). In both cases, what truly *is* will necessarily be beautiful in its complete state, and what is truly beautiful will necessarily be good.

Thus, there is a fundamental relation between the Beautiful and the Good. Both forms will be entirely beautiful and good in nature due to their wholeness and stable state, and consequently both will partake in *aletheia* in equal amounts. The ladder, in a way, can be seen as the line particularized in terms of beauty; that is, particularized in terms of what is the most

accessible form for human beings. Whereas not all individuals engage in the epistemological progression of the line, most human beings engage in the experience of the love of the beautiful. Thus, beauty is a more accessible form for individuals and a form that can lead even non-philosophers to philosophical understanding and bring them closer to the Good. [9]

However, this is not the end of the journey for either the philosopher or the lover, as in both cases the individual is required to go back down the line or the ladder, as we can see in Diotima's encomium with the lover going back to give birth in beauty. In the case of the lover and as stated previously in the examination of Diotima's encomium, the lover is now able to give birth in beauty, that is, to produce and create with her newfound *noesis* offspring that partake truly in the Beautiful, whether physically or intellectually. The philosopher also returns; as delineated in the allegory of the cave once the philosopher *understands,* it is her turn to go back to the cave, to use *eikasia* now to teach philosophy properly. The Platonic account, which can be seen as leaving the end 'up in the clouds' or the metaphysical, takes a turn here, as in both progressions the individual must return to the physical in order to continue the journey. Both the lover and the philosopher are prompted to go back and through the various steps in their epistemological journeys reach an appreciation of the Beautiful and the Good in order to act from the perspective of this newfound understanding. The end of the line is thus not a resting place for contemplation, but the trigger for philosophical action in the *Republic*: the philosopher goes back to the cave out of duty, the lover goes back to give birth *in* beauty, to create with the understanding of what is truly beautiful. The philosopher and the lover are thereby demonstrated to partake in an analogous journey; as Belfiore explains, "the ladder of love is there the path that leads from the Socratic elenchus to the doctrine of Forms" (142).

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9. The full examination of the relationship between the Beautiful and the Good is conducted in the following chapter.

However, how similar are the Beautiful and the Good as objects of desire in these journeys? Both *eros* and the philosopher possess, ontologically, the same object of love. For the former, it is Beauty in Itself, *auto to kalos,* that is desired, a beauty that partakes only in absolutes as a form. For the latter, the goal is apprehension of *agathos*, the good in itself, the quintessential form. In both cases, the state of being *qua* being is desired, an intellectual state wherein there is only *noesis* and immediate – and complete – apprehension. Since the philosopher's object of love is *noesis* of the Good*,* the philosopher is the individual who is truly erotic, as he longs after that which is the most beautiful of all being: "by his nature then, love is a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, because love is always drawn to beauty, and wisdom is among the class of beautiful things" (Cooksey 73). In fact both the Beautiful and the Good are spoken of in ways that are sometimes interchangeable, as it follows that in the Platonic doctrine what is *truly* good is indeed the most beautiful object of desire because of its goodness. Conversely, what is *truly kalos* will be so *because* of its goodness, not merely due to tangible attractiveness, as shown through the juxtaposition of Agathon, the *kalos* physique, versus Socrates, the *kalos* soul. As Gary Alan Scott & William A. Welton argue, not only is *eros* depicted as a *daimonic* messenger to the realm of being *qua* being, i.e. the Forms, but "philosophy itself is shown to be a form of *eros*" (18), and this form of *eros* would be the desire for what is truly beautiful and good.

The desire for what is truly beautiful is juxtaposed with the desire for images of the Beautiful, i.e. representations that partake in the beautiful but that are in still in a stage of becoming and consequently partake of what is non-*kalos* as well. The realm of *eikasia* has been usually attributed to poetry, and the medium of poetry is traditionally viewed as possessing a greater appeal than philosophy, moving "men most deeply" (Strauss 6) and thereby upholding itself as a formidable competitor in matters of authority for wisdom. In fact, the *Symposium* is the

dialogue in which the poets are actually present to compete actively against philosophy, and where philosophy seems to win in endurance (as shown at the end of the dialogue in the conversation between Socrates, Agathon, and Aristophanes), but not in immediate attraction; for example, Agathon's beauty overshadows Socrates' virtue, as shown with Alcibiades' initial immediate attraction to Agathon. The problem is that "poetic wisdom is in the first place, splendid; philosophical wisdom is not" (Strauss 33), that is, poetry's beauty shines brighter than the beauty of philosophy. Since Diotima's ladder ends in action, the production of beauty, poets are in fact elevated and praised for their beautiful creations, and in a way, philosophers are commended to do the same, to combine truth with the medium of poetry to produce beautiful philosophy. The main difference, however, is that the philosopher strives after that which surpasses the realm of *eikasia*, seeking what is beautiful *and* good in a complementing manner. In the realm of becoming physical beauty can come without internal goodness, characterized by Alcibiades, and internal goodness and beauty can come without physical beauty, as seen in Socrates, but in the noumenal world of the Forms what is truly beautiful will be good and vice versa.

Thus, the natural intuition that beauty does not imply goodness is correct; however, this is an intuition that is only correct when applied to the world of becoming, not to the world of being in itself. Consequently, the Beautiful and the Good both stand at the same level ontologically and epistemologically for the lover and the philosopher, who share the same object of love. As it is, then, *eros* is capable of leading the individual, through its more common love of the beautiful, towards the same object of love desired by the philosopher, towards *noesis* of the Forms.

Eros, existing in the stage between the sensible and the intelligible, the world of phenomena and the noumenal, thus exists in a sort of becoming stage that allows it to partake of

both extremes; as a sort of Hermes, *eros* travels back and forth from the world of forms to the human world, binding both together. As Hyland explains, "*eros*' ontological condition is not quite one of simple lacking, but rather that of the *metaxu* (in-between; middle ground): *eros* is the in-between" (46). *Eros*' capacity to exist 'in-between' is precisely what makes it foundational for philosophical inquiry, and what makes the philosopher the quintessential erotician. For Scott & Welton the two pillar features of philosophy in the *Symposium* are that "philosophy is fundamentally erotic" and that "as erotic, philosophy lies between ignorance and wisdom and also between the human and the divine" (3). Accordingly, both *eros* and the philosopher exist in the stage of *metaxu*, following the erotic endeavor grounded on Socratic ignorance and human lack. In this manner, the *daimonic* messenger becomes the principle for action for both physical and psychological experiences, and not just for corporeal desires. *Eros* dwells on both the physical and psychological in equal measure, as shown in the encomiums that fluctuate between the desire for bodies to the desire for *logos*. These examples demonstrate the strong pull that *eros* has on individuals. Since *eros* works in a dual manner, objects of love that only encompass one aspect seem to have a weaker grasp as they fail to appeal to both our *psyche* and our physical nature. Diotima's ladder starts in the physical and transcends to the purely rational to then *return* to a combination of both through creation in beauty. Even though the culmination of the ladder is to apprehend the Form of Beauty, the ladder does not reject one aspect of human nature in favour of the other, which would make one account incompatible for our corporeal nature and the other incompatible for philosophy, but rather elevates both as important for the stage of *metaxu* in which the individual operates; after coming in contact with true beauty it is valid to seek immortality via procreation or via *kalos* rational activity.

Love, then, stands as the self-motion of the soul in *all* of its aspects, longing to fix the wound of human nature by desiring what it does not possess, beauty. In the Aristophanean account this implies a movement back to the self, an appropriation of the other; for Socrates, erotic desire will seek what is truly beautiful, starting from particular beauty and moving to beautiful *logoi*. The highest object of love is thereby beauty, and creation in beauty is a search for happiness accessible to all: "somehow beauty is, as it were, a sudden vision of what would really make us happy" (Gould 46). This happiness, accessed through the beautiful and in an emotion as accessible as love keeps us in this world, and "the beautiful itself is found and studied in the production of its wordly manifestations" (Cobb 83). In the next chapter we will examine in-depth how beauty becomes the tool that we need to get out of an aporetic state and into philosophy. Something must occur for philosophical discourse to begin, and this something is the experience of the beautiful. As we will examine in the following section, beauty has an advantage to it that other Forms do not, a tangible presence in the world that makes it shine brighter and attract our *eros* like no other object of desire. Beauty is the sight that brings *logos* to life in a non-discursive way, awakening *dianoia* and the *eros* to achieve understanding.

Chapter 3 Beauty

3.1 Beauty and the ladder to the Forms

It is now clear that *eros*, our *daimonic* intermediary between the world of opinion and that of *noesis*, is the human capacity by which we can move up the epistemological ladder towards transcendence. *Eros* allows us to heal the wound of human nature, which is our irrefutable ignorance of true knowledge, by inciting in us the motivation to go forward, to leap into action, whether physically or intellectually. This inherent erotic desire within our beings has been portrayed as a more powerful ally for the philosophical endeavour than is rationality itself, since it burns in us more intensely than any other of our faculties. When *eros* calls, we listen. In fact, we do more than just listen, we *act.* This powerful trigger is what allows Diotima's lover to become engaged in the progression of the ladder in the first place, as soon as *eros* is ignited at the sight of beauty. However, thanks to the speeches we know the various dangerous side effects of *eros* – Phaedrus' excessive courageous behaviours, Aristophanes' creatures fixated on each other rather than on philosophy, Alcibiades' blind devotion to Socrates. It is evident that *eros* is as powerful as it is dangerous, especially when our goal is philosophical education. Why, then, is the Beautiful, the ultimate object of love, given as our greatest motivation to begin the philosophical journey to the Forms? Why is it that what is *kalos* is presented as the most potent *pharmakon* against *aporia*, as well as what is capable of leading individuals from negative to positive Socratic ignorance, i.e., towards a desire to fix their ignorance due to their awareness of their condition? We have already been witnesses to how dangerous the seduction of sensible beauty can be, capable of straying would-be philosophical souls away from the pursuit of *aletheia* (truth) and presenting carnal obstacles to the individual who should be, at least, devoted to learning.

The Platonic problem for our embodied nature is the movement up the ladder; the line deems this world, the physical world, as less real, and thus, the sensible and immediate is shunned, to some extent, as an inadequate recipient and provider of philosophical truth, as shown in the *Phaedo*. The Forms, on the other hand, in all their abstract and distant gloriousness, are the ultimate epistemological rewards that we should be seeking, even when we are doomed to fail in this quest from the onset, as they are "glimmering desiderata, the objects of a quest, objects that can inspire us, but which continually elude us in some way" (Scott & Welton 23). The problem is that the quest for the Good lacks sufficient sensible manifestation to act as the carrot dangling in front of our deeply erotic natures. However, in order for *eros* to be activated for this sensibly unsecure goal, the Forms must be present to us in one way or another in order to inspire the quest in the first place. It is here where the Beautiful becomes more advantageous than the other Forms, as it is the most available Form for human beings to come into contact with, since it exists in the sensible in a more tangible manner than do the more abstract Forms.

By bringing the quest back to the physical plane Plato unites the highest goal of the lover and the philosopher as one – the Beautiful. The physical, which appears to be disdained in other accounts, such as the *Phaedo* shows, is vindicated in the *Symposium* via Diotima's exposition. At first glance, the physical is catalogued as incongruent with philosophical endeavours. This idea is present in Heraclitus' flux that inspires the Platonic cosmology. Heraclitus' concept of flux, described after his death as the principle of Πάντα ῥεῖ (*panta rhei*: 'everything flows'), referred to the idea that in this world everything flowed from one state to another, constantly coming together and falling apart, so that nothing was ever one thing at any point, to the extent that nothing can be known. According to this theory there is no stability in sensation, as it is in a permanent state of change, and this is a concept that inspires the Platonic doctrine of Forms and

its apparent 'disdain' of the physical world. Yet, as demonstrated in the dialogues devoted to *eros, philia*, and *auto to kalos*, the remedy for human nature is *in* human nature itself; it is part of the sensible world in its constant state of change. Beauty, the form that shines the brightest in the sensible realm is the most powerful incentive for *eros*, our *daimonic* messenger between ignorance and truth, between flux and stability. With beauty as the key for philosophical investigation, Plato brings the point of reference to this world, stating that the beginning of the answer is in fact at our reach, since our *eros* is not only naturally attracted to beauty but beauty is a Form that shines sensibly for individuals.

Thus, the tyrant of the *Republic* becomes the Socratic iconophile and devourer of images; the lover of beautiful boys becomes a lover of a more complete *kalos kagathos* (ideal personal conduct, 'beautiful and good'). As both journeys lead these individuals *back* to the world of shadows and beautiful bodies, both are prompted to create a kind of beauty that will allow the Beautiful to be manifested brightly in the world of becoming. For such a goal, we need the biggest incentive, one that will initially appeal to both our rational and erotic natures, our white horse *and* black horse in equal measurement, and this incentive will be beauty, not wisdom in itself, at least not in the sensible realm. I will now explain what makes the Beautiful a more powerful contender and incentive for human beings to engage in philosophy than is the Good. I will carry out this examination by first focusing on the beauty of individuals and that of poetry in juxtaposition to philosophy, to explain why beauty shines brighter than any other Form in the sensible realm, thus making it an essential element of philosophical education. This examination will shed light on why sensible beauty need not be devoid of truth and disdained, but in fact must be used by philosophy due to beauty's accessibility. Next, I will explore beauty's cognitive priority, that is, its ability to be cognized immediately and non-discursively to understand further

its advantage over other Forms and why it is such an appropriate trigger for human *eros*. Finally, I will examine the way in which beauty is capable of provoking critical inquiry to shed light on the epistemological progression of the lover in the *Symposium* as a philosophical advancement in its core. This examination will show how important beauty is, specifically the experience of sensible beauty, for Platonic philosophical education, by showing how the journey to knowledge begins in the particular experience of beauty due to beauty's accessibility and connection to our *eros*. This connection, the natural longing of *eros* for what is beautiful, when properly channeled, can become a powerful ally for philosophical inquiry. From here, we will conclude the examination of beauty as the pedagogical tool needed for philosophical education that thrives on the natural association between *eros* and that which is beautiful.

3.2 Beauty's star: what makes the Beautiful different from the other Platonic Forms and what this means for Platonic philosophy

To understand beauty's power we must examine what makes the Beautiful different from other Platonic forms, in order to understand why it is a more effective recruiter for philosophy than is the Good itself. To do this, I will examine the way in which the form of the Beautiful manifests in particular representations versus particular representations of other Forms. I will first examine beauty as the only form with concrete physical representations to examine then how beauty in the particular is used as a starting point for philosophical investigation in the *Symposium*, as well as in the *Phaedrus*. At this point, we will understand why beauty commands so much attention as opposed to other Forms, and how, as a result, beauty stands as the most accessible of the Forms and the ideal starting point for philosophy due to the way it manifests to our *eros*. It is important to remember throughout that in Chapter 2 we examined fully how *eros* is defined in the dialogue not only as that which loves beauty the most, but as the element in our

soul that makes us act and that allows us to step onto in the ladder to the Beautiful in the first place.

What differentiates beauty from other Platonic forms, primarily, is its tangible brightness or what I term its 'obviousness' in the sensible realm; as Hyland explains: "beauty is perhaps the paradigm case of a phenomenon that has both physical and psychological manifestations; we can speak of beautiful bodies, and we can speak of beautiful souls" (42). Whereas the Good exists in an incorporeal manner, able to be described in language, yet too abstract to grasp materially or to come in contact with, the Beautiful has a manifold of instances that are available to human experience in a less esoteric fashion than the Good has. The Forms can feel too abstract and disconnected from the general human experience. The level of abstractness of Plato's transcendent goal makes it hard for individuals to relate to these archetypes, especially such abstract notions as virtue, as they do not have tangible, clear, particular representations, as do beautiful objects or people.

Although we find wise or courageous individuals, for example, these are categories in which consensus is more difficult to be attained than in examples of the Beautiful, for several reasons. For example, debates about the actions of a man going inside a burning building to rescue his dog are prone to be colourful and antagonistic; some will argue that his courage is nothing but stupidity and disregard for his own life, others will ask how courageous would he have been to rescue a human being or someone else's dog. And yet, some will fervently argue that his actions are indeed heroic and truly courageous. Consensus over braveness and whether or not this man fits the description of 'courage' would be attained with difficulty, as in Phaedrus' example of the bravery of the lover in his encomium which proved to be problematic. In fact, early Socratic dialogues such as the *Charmides* or *Lysis* all end in *aporia*, since consensus over

abstract concepts, such as what defines *sophrosune*, or what constitutes friendship, could not be achieved. An example of this lack of consensus is produced as a result of philosophical debate over Plato's *Crito* and Socrates' own definition of justice. For example, when reading first year Philosophy papers about Socrates' refusal to escape and his own definition of what justice is – submitting to the law of the city one agrees to when agreeing to be its citizen, whether this law, enabled by men, sends you to your death or not – the main thread seems to be outrage at Socrates' refusal to escape. The most common question is: is it not obvious that Socrates is not guilty of corrupting the youth and thus, it would be just for him to escape? Some people argue that the just and virtuous thing to do is to escape from an unjust death, calling Socrates a coward for his blind acceptance, whereas others would call him a coward precisely for escaping, and would deem unjust not to follow the rules of the city once the city goes against a particular person. Furthermore, even Plato produces different accounts of this act, since the *Apology* seems to oppose the *Crito* in its portrayal of Socrates and how he accepts his sentence. The difficulty to achieve consensus over abstract concepts that do not have defined representations is clear, as it is hard to match an entirely abstract Form to a particular context.

A discussion of beauty is more likely to produce less heterogeneous results, since, unlike the Good or justice for example, beauty can have concrete physical manifestations; for example, we can point to a beautiful person or to a beautiful painting. People tend to have an *easier* time agreeing on the beauty of beaches or mountain ranges, as well as the beauty of art and people because the physical representations of beauty can be seen concretely; they lack the abstract quality that concepts such as the Good or virtue possess inherently. It is important to emphasize that it is *not* that the paradigms of beauty are agreed to unanimously by all individuals, but rather that if people do not agree on the beauty of a particular painting or individual, it is easier for

them to shrug it off to the idea of beauty's subjective appreciation. In other words, that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder,' whereas the same level of flexibility does not occur for justice or virtue. Arguably, disagreement over what is beautiful does exist, but this disagreement does not lead individuals to vicious arguments in the same way as a similar discussion on what is good does; we just need to look at all the wars waged in the name of what is just to a group of people or what is the ultimate goodness for another in contrast to all the wars fought in the name of beauty – none - to understand that disagreements over what is beautiful do not lead people to attacks of that magnitude. On the contrary, individuals are more likely to leave others to experience beauty in their own subjective way, and are more likely to agree that the experience is unique to each individual.

Moreover, beauty has an inherent quality that commands attention, especially because of the way it speaks directly to the most appetitive part of our nature. When Agathon describes the beauty of *eros* in his eulogy the crowd bursts into applause because it is so *obvious* to them that Agathon just gave a fitting description of love's beauty, delivered in a truly *kalos* package. Whereas we can discuss the courageous *actions* of an individual and we are able to observe courage in other people, such as Rosa Parks or the Tiananmen square man, we cannot grasp courage in itself; yet, we can both rationalize and experience beauty, as it has both a psychological and physical perception that the Good or courage, for example, possess in a lesser extent. For example, we can experience beauty physically in our appreciation of art or another human being, and intellectually in our admiration of literary prowess or our understanding of abstract feelings such as love or kindness. Conversely, we do not experience the Good in the same manner. There is no physical representation of the Good that we can point to with certainty and say: "There! That is a physical manifestation of the Good;" at least not with the same

determination and confidence as we would have with a representation of beauty. We are more likely to experience the appreciation of courage intellectually, and even then, it acquires this esoteric quality proper to the divine that makes its validation harder. What *is* an example of the Good? How do we categorize manifestations of justice in this realm without disagreement? There is a lot to be said about beauty's sensible obviousness that separates it from other Forms.

For example, beauty's physical manifestations are evident, since its "pre-eminent visibility is due to its *incandescence*" (Reeve 146, own emphasis); it shines sensibly in a way that other forms cannot. The *Symposium* begins with the beauty of a particular person, foreshadowing what Socrates will later describe as the starting point of all investigations into philosophy. Apollodorus begins the dialogue by stating that he is already prepared to discuss Socrates' involvement in Agathon's banquet (*Symposium* 172a) – as becomes clear, Apollodorus is obsessed with Socrates as much as the latter claims to Glaucon to be obsessed with philosophy. Our narrator explains that he derives his biggest satisfactions from conversation (*Symposium* 173c), and also confesses that he goes to great lengths to know everything Socrates does and says on a daily basis (*Symposium* 172c). Thus, for Apollodorus, his devotion to Socrates is connected to his devotion to philosophy and acts as the starting point for him to engage in dialectic in addition to keeping his interest in philosophy alive. In Apollodorus' case, it is his devotion to a particular individual that immerses him into philosophy; his addiction to Socrates is what precedes his dialogical obsession. This same movement is present in a more explicit manner through Aristodemus' relationship to Socrates, and Alcibiades' friendship with the latter. Aristodemus' relationship with Socrates is like that of Apollodorus. It is through his devotion to Socrates that Aristodemus goes to a banquet where philosophy is discussed that he would otherwise not have attended. Apollodorus himself calls him "obsessed with Socrates"

(*Symposium* 173a). In fact, Aristodemus' quick submission to Socrates ("I'll do whatever you say" (*Symposium* 174b) in response to Socrates' invitation) suggests the extent to which Socrates' individual beauty, in both soul and body, affects Aristodemus and lures him into philosophy and the subjects in which Socrates himself is interested. It is through their love of Socrates' particular beauty that both Aristodemus and Apollodorus love philosophy.

For Alcibiades, on the other hand, it is Socrates' inner beauty that is obvious to him, but he requires Socrates' physical presence on a daily basis if he is to stay on a good path; as he explains, "the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways" (*Symposium* 216b). Alcibiades requires this particular presence to continue his philosophical immersion since it is the tangible reminder of Socrates' beauty that he needs. In this manner, even though Alcibiades recognizes Socrates' *inner* beauty, he still needs the physical vessel of this beauty – Socrates – in order to be reminded. This reaction is not unusual as we have seen that Alcibiades and many of the interlocutors in the dialogue view the attainment of wisdom as something that can be transferred physically from one individual to another. Even though he already has *knowledge* of what he needs to do, he requires the presence of beauty to act, as "knowing is not the same as doing" (Cooksey 110). In Alcibiades' case, this knowledge is the realization that Socrates has provoked in him, the knowledge he now has that he must change his ways if he is to be virtuous. Without the physical reminder of the beauty he desires, i.e. Socrates himself, the desire for physical pleasure overwhelms Alcibiades and keeps him away from his nobler goals. In this manner, even from a general overview of Socrates' three followers, it is evident that in the *Symposium* the individual and the beauty that he or she emanates already precede the interest in philosophy.

In fact, beauty shines so brightly in this world that it sometimes overshadows manifestations of wisdom, whose brightness pales in comparison, as wisdom is not as tangible

and visible. Once again, wisdom cannot be reached for and grabbed like beauty can; one cannot touch wisdom, it is not tangible in that sense. Moreover, its star does not shine as bright as that of beauty; in other words, wisdom is not as compelling to our *eros* as is the sight of the beautiful. Wisdom does not initially send our *eros* in the frenzy for action that beauty provokes. Agathon, for example, is a more powerful magnet of gazes than is Socrates, not only through his looks but through the empty *kalos* of his poetry. When Alcibiades comes into the room, Agathon's beauty permeates the scene to the extent that Alcibiades focuses only on him. Alcibiades comes in announcing that he wants to crown "the cleverest and best looking man" (*Symposium* 212e). Not only is Alcibiades deeming himself as both outstandingly *kalos* and smart, as the crown is meant to move directly from his head to that of the chosen one, but Alcibiades once again highlights the erroneous association between physical beauty and wisdom that we have seen throughout the dialogue – the most physically beautiful man in the room must clearly be the cleverest too. Alcibiades actively seeks first an image of goodness and beauty that is embodied in Agathon and characteristic of both the first stage of the line and the foundational step of Diotima's ladder. However, this image possesses superficial beauty but not necessarily goodness, as we examined in the comparison between the *Republic*'s line allegory and Diotima's ladder of love in section 2.6 of this thesis.

Furthermore, Agathon's beauty is so captivating that Alcibiades walks past Socrates and sits down without even noticing Socrates making room for him at his side (*Symposium* 213b). Alcibiades' crowning of transient beauty consumes his attention entirely, to the point that it literally covers his eyes to his philosophical friend:

> "He kept trying to take his ribbons off so that he could crown Agathon
> with them, but all he succeeded in doing was to push them further down

> his head until they finally slipped over his eyes. What with the ivy and all, he didn't see Socrates, who had made room for him on the couch as soon as he saw him" (*Symposium* 213b).

This blindness leads Alcibiades to crown poetry over philosophy at first glance: to celebrate and choose physical beauty over beauty of the soul, the shiny beauty of poetry over the less immediately obvious, non-corporeal beauty of philosophy. Alcibiades' momentary blindness can be juxtaposed to the enlightened blindness associated with Tyresias and Homer, a blindness seen as a necessary condition for wisdom. This blindness is presented as a sort of aporetic starting point for metaphysical investigation which is possible once visual sensibility fades to cave way for acuteness of intellectual perception. In Alcibiades' case, sensible beauty shines so brightly it blinds him to Socrates, representing the path of philosophy and virtue, and this action emphasizes the tangible *kalos* quality of sensible beauty versus that of wisdom or the Good in the phenomenal realm.

Moreover, Agathon's beauty extends far beyond his extraordinary looks: the beauty of his words have equally powerful effects, conveying the obviousness of poetry's beauty versus that of philosophy, a recurrent theme that Plato also explores in the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*. By 'obviousness,' once again, I am referring to beauty's ability to appear clearly and visibly to us in such a way that it engages immediately our perception and our *eros*, which, as explained in Chapter 2, naturally longs after beauty more than any other object of desire. I have already mentioned that the room bursting into applause at the end of Agathon's encomium is indicative of the influence of beauty even when it is devoid of truth; Aristodemus even explains that the room agreed that the speech matched not only Agathon's physical beauty, but the beauty of the god of love himself (*Symposium* 198a). Socrates emphasizes this influence when he asks, "who

would not be struck dumb on hearing the beauty of the words and phrases?" (*Symposium* 198b), cleverly emphasizing the *kalos* nature of the *form* of Agathon's speech, but not of the eulogy's content or meaning. Socrates suggests that this vacuous beauty, to some extent, can leave its audience momentarily *dumb,* which seems to be an effect of all particular beauty, witnessed in the blind devotion of Socrates' followers and the blind celebration of Agathon's guests. In addition, this is a temporary dumbness that leaves the audience in a stupor rather than in the realization of *aporia*, which as we examined in Chapter 2 is a necessary recognition for the individual to pursue knowledge. In the *Meno*, Socrates moves Meno to this realization through dialectic, a process that leaves the interlocutor acknowledging her errors of judgment and prepared to fix them, whereas Agathon's speech leaves the individual satisfied with her ignorance, since there is no recognition of this ignorance in the first place.

In the dialogue there appears to be an association between the beauty of form and the beauty of poetry: empty shadows that *sound* lovely and are capable of commanding the soul's undivided attention. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates is aware of his interlocutor's predilection for beautiful form over beautiful content, and knows this tendency must be fixed in order to move Phaedrus to desire a beauty whose *kalos* quality derives from its participation in what is good and true. In the *Symposium,* after Agathon's speech, he is very clear about this division: "You will hear the truth about Love, and the words and phrasing will take care of themselves" (199b). Socrates does not want to deny that the obviousness of sensible beauty is compatible with philosophy, but he merely seems to be suggesting that for less tangible things, such as the Forms themselves, beauty is derived from the Forms participating in truth and what is good. In fact, Socrates, and on a larger scale Plato, incorporate this quality so that both form and content inform each other dialogically. As a result, Socrates caters to Phaedrus' predilection for beauty in

the *Phaedrus*, crafting a powerful image of the soul that is meant to deliver truth in a beautiful, allegorical image typical of the plane of *eikasia*. In this manner, Socrates is able to trigger Phaedrus' *eros* for beauty with the form of the myth, while at the same time trying to deliver a lesson on the nature of the soul. Socrates is guilty of this greediness for images in the *Republic* as well, as he tries to educate his interlocutors through the overarching allegorical investigation of justice in the city in lieu of the soul through the use of powerful allegories (Line, Cave, Sun) and myths (Myth of the Metals, Er). These poetic representations are employed for effectiveness in engaging the interlocutors within the dialogue and the readers of the text in dialectic, targeting both the rational capacity and the *eros* for beauty within each individual in a way that does not look down on desire, but rather incorporates it in Socrates' dialectic.

The antagonism between philosophy and poetry is clearly delineated in the *Symposium* itself, where the philosopher contends against the master tragedian, Agathon, and the quintessential comedian, Aristophanes, for the attention of their audience. However, this 'competition' is more than just vying for the most passionate applause and standing ovation, but rather, it deals with a theme that affects all human beings: love, and the way we think about it and approach it. Plato crafts three beautiful speeches with various degrees of truth and sensible 'brightness.' Aristophanes has, arguably, the most memorable encomium of the entire dialogue, replicated to this date in art and even rock musicals.[10] The tragic flaw of humanity, as described in Aristophanes' story as our splitting in half and subsequent deprivation, speaks to the human longing for completeness and union with another, yet possessing a beautiful and appealing twist, since the 'other' we search for ends up ultimately being the self. Agathon's speech speaks less to

10. Such as the 2001 musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, based on the off-Broadway production by the same name.

human nature and more to the power of beauty to persuade, as evident in the effect it produces on the audience. The speech is so powerful in its presentation that its superficiality is quickly ignored. Clearly, Plato understands the importance of the brightness of beauty and its consequent persuasiveness, as he gives Agathon and Aristophanes speeches that are not only *kalos*, but contain some portion of *aletheia.*[11]

In doing this, Plato conveys that the beauty of this world is not always devoid of truth, and most importantly, need not be devoid of it, as it is powerfully attractive, whereas truth is not regarded to have the same degree of beauty in this world. In other words, in the empirical realm, truth sometimes is incompatible with our desires, which leads us to reject it, to state that truth is sometimes ugly, and go to the extent of upholding that 'ignorance is bliss.' These ideas would be illogical in a metaphysical context where Truth, because of its nature, would not only equal happiness, but also what is truly Beautiful. Everything would be whole and thus the sight of Truth alone would make the individual desire it. In the empirical realm there is no instantaneous alignment between what is true and what is considered to be beautiful. As a result, Plato makes Socrates incorporate the true aspects of his predecessors' speeches –with an emphasis on Agathon's insistence on beauty and using Aristophanes' account of human ontology – into a speech that not only conveys truth, but does so in a *kalos* manner through images of what love is, such as Diotima's ladder of love, which represents the smooth journey that the soul can take via *eros* to be in communion with transcendence. Thus, Plato is aware of the brightness of beauty and incorporates it into Socrates' philosophical discourse, beautifying his words to appeal to the

11. As I discussed in section 2.3 this *aletheia* is present in both Aristophanes and Agathon's eulogies. From Aristophanes' ontological account Diotima takes up the inherent lack in human nature that powers our *eros*. In addition she incorporates Agathon's fixation on beauty and beauty's connection to our erotic activity.

eros of his audience,[12] just like Socrates makes himself *kalos* to go to talk about philosophy (*Symposium* 174a).

Yet, beautiful people and words are not the only vessels in which beauty's brightness manifests more tangibly than do other Forms; it is the scenery itself in which beauty shines. This aspect is present in the structure of the banquet itself, in which the beautiful setting proves conducive to rational discussion. In ancient Greece, symposiums were celebratory banquets characterized for the beauty in their décor and the heavy drinking that took place in them. In fact, the word *symposion* itself means 'to drink together.' These banquets were characterized by constant entertainment in the form of flute girls, music, and sexual encounters. This *Symposium*, however, is one where Dionysus is replaced by conversation, and where the traditionally beautiful elements are replaced by the beauty of *logos.* In this case, the traditionally beautiful scenery is used to encourage philosophical dialogue, just like many times universities and libraries, places devoted to learning, are examples of beautiful architectural prowess. The beauty that surrounds the entire banquet in itself is representative of the power that sensible beauty can have to encourage learning.

The accessibility of the Beautiful over other Forms suggests that through the medium of love – that is, our *eros* that longs for beauty as its object - and particularly, love of the beautiful in all of its manifestations, philosophical learning is available to more than just the philosopher, but to *all* individuals. For some individuals, love is as philosophical as they will get, and love

12. Plato seems to suggest that this combination is the most effective one, and he symbolizes this victory over poetry by making Socrates outlast both Aristophanes and Agathon in *conversation*, since they both fall asleep before Socrates leaves to have a regular day at the Lyceum (*Symposium* 223d). It is important to note that only these three men stay awake and drink from the same cup while Socrates discusses how "authors should be able to write both comedy and tragedy" (*Symposium* 223d). Is Plato suggesting that this incorporation of form and content is what the philosopher must achieve, and that in fact, Socrates has achieved it? This analysis will take place in the next chapter.

seems to be the most definite thing that unites human beings. By this I mean that, according to Diotima's account, through the love of beauty individuals are able to access the Forms in the same way as the individual is able to go up the Line and out of the cave (as we examined fully in section 2.6). Not all individuals will embark on this philosophical journey by their *eros* to know; however, more individuals could, even unknowingly, move up the ladder via their *eros* for beauty, embarking on an epistemological progression to knowledge because of the fact that they are lovers. As Reale puts it, for Plato: "that which men commonly call love is only a small part of true love: love is a desire for *beauty*, for the *good*, for *wisdom*, for *happiness*, for *immortality*, for the *absolute*" (171, emphasis in original). Even if the movement up the ladder is not completed by the lover, love has already given him access to this philosophical progression.

This account thereby not only includes the human end but also includes our ontological status as described by Aristophanes and taken up in Diotima, wherein the inherent lack in human nature propels us outside our nature and into the search of an 'other.' Although ideally this 'other' should be what is unmediated, in reality it is more immediate to us in the form of another human being. As Socrates explains to Phaedrus in the *Phaedrus,* human beings are the only sources of knowledge he possesses: "I am devoted to learning; landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me – only the people in the city can do that" (230c). An example of this point is the Socratic method of elenchus itself which requires a dialectical relationship between two individuals in order to engage in philosophy. A specific example of a relationship of this kind leading the individual forward is Diotima's relationship with Socrates in the *Symposium,* which proves that the journey to knowledge does not begin in abstract universality. So far, we have seen how beauty acts as the perfect trigger for our *eros.* In Chapter 2 we examined how *eros*, naturally attracted to beauty, is motivated to act at the sight of what it loves the most. Beauty is

not just the Form with the clearest physical manifestations, but it is initially more demanding of attention, since beauty tends to overshadow anything that it is compared to, as we saw with the example of Agathon's external beauty. Thus, in a particular context, beauty is powerful enough to lead us into action, and for Diotima, into philosophy.

Diotima is an unusual character in the dialogue for many reasons. First of all, she is a woman, and not only were women traditionally excluded from *symposions* – the only females were the flute girls – but in Ancient Greece the reciprocal relationship of learning was characterized in the 'beautiful young boy – wise older man' relationship. Secondly, Diotima speaks not from a place of philosophy, but of religion: she is a priestess. Diotima's name itself means 'honoured by Zeus,' and her place of origin, Mantinea, is reminiscent of the word mantic, meaning that which relates to prophecy (Evans 8).[13] Thus, in a very real way Diotima is a representation of the divine introduced by Socrates to the conversation, via his *eros* for learning which leads him to submit to her as a student: "she is the one who taught me the art of love" (*Symposium* 201d). Finally, Diotima's status as a foreigner emphasizes her abstract role as a source of knowledge that is completely alien to the individuals gathered at Agathon's house; in fact, Diotima not only represents the divine knowledge that love should eventually lead us towards, but she represents the beginning of the journey to the Good in the particular teacher, in a specific and temporal other. Socrates learns what he knows about love from Diotima because the journey *must* begin in the particular, in the other. In fact, it is our human nature, our *eros* that goes crazy at the sight of beauty, precisely what makes love and beauty as accessible and as crucial for philosophy as Plato delineates. Thus, what some individuals see as Socrates' disdain

13. Nancy Evans explains that Mantinike, the Greek word for Diotima's place of origin, "notably appears to contain the root mantis, which means 'prophet, seer,' and strongly suggests that Diotima is herself a prophetess, or at least is somehow associated with prophecy" (8).

for the physical, an *eros* that is purely directed to metaphysics, as shown in the *Phaedo* – what Taylor terms Socrates' "amor mysticus" (209) – is a limited analysis of Plato's account, as it actually disregards the insistence on the individual as the stepping stone for philosophy present in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, as well as the *Republic.*

Now, what this theory suggests is that when an individual comes into contact with a particular manifestation of beauty, this example evokes in her the knowledge of a higher and more absolute form of beauty in which this example partakes. According to Plato's theory of recollection this is true of all knowledge: human beings have already been in contact with the Forms prior to birth and education here is a collection of knowledge previously gained. Since we have already explained that beauty is the form that shines the brightest in the sensible realm, it is logical to think that through beauty most individuals are more capable of recollection than they would be through any other kind of learning. In this sense both love and philosophy are united, since they both partake in desiring a higher object, whether it is the beautiful or the Good: "it seems also that love is already bound up with ideas, with *logos*; we have desires for something or other, our desires have objects […] But whatever we desire has an ideational content, a Form, a whatness that makes what it is" (Scott & Welton 95).

This connection is made explicit in the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue that sheds light on many of the topics touched upon in the *Symposium.* Throughout the dialogue, there is the reminder that knowledge begins with the particular, even if the object of our knowledge must lead us into universality. Reale argues that in the *Phaedrus* Plato "sheds further light on the problem of the *synthetic* and *mediating* nature of love, by linking it with the doctrine of recollection" (173, emphasis in original); that is, the *Phaedrus* helps elucidate how *eros* acts as a mediatory element between human beings and knowledge. From Socrates' first statement, "if I don't know my

Phaedrus I must be forgetting who I am myself" (*Phaedrus* 228a), we can deduce that self-knowledge, and ultimately *all* knowledge, begins in the exploration of a particular other that will aid in the process of recollection.[14] Socrates touches more explicitly upon recollection in the chariot allegory (*Phaedrus* 246a), where he explains the movement of the soul from before it comes into contact with the body. According to the myth, the charioteer follows the same journey that the gods follow to come into contact with the Forms. Whereas for the gods this contact is immediate and the journey is a smooth one – as they are only in possession of the tamed, well-trained white horse – for human beings this ride has obstacles, primarily the reigning in of the wild nature of the black horse. If a soul cannot control the black horse enough it will lose its wings and materialize in human form, given an existence that fits the journey it took part in prior to incarnation. In this manner, souls go after the gods they followed even prior to embodiment, which means that they will be naturally desirous of those Forms that they came into contact with the most.

Up to this point, the hypothesis of the theory of recollection is set out quite clearly: souls did as much as possible to see the Forms and achieve enlightenment prior to their incarnation, and their embodied desires are a direct result of their possession of the Forms that they saw before coming to earth. But how does this recollection take place once the soul is stuck in the phenomenal world? Socrates himself states the difficulty of attaining recollection once the body is present, and he makes clear that "not every soul is easily reminded of the reality there by what it finds here" (*Phaedrus* 250a); that is, most souls will *not* be able to achieve recollection via sensible reminders, since the body now acts as an impediment to true vision. However, the way

14. For another Platonic dialogue that deals with self-examination and critical inquiry via the relationship with another person see *Alcibides I* and *Meno.*

around this impediment seems to be, once again, contact with sensible beauty. As Socrates states, vision is the "sharpest of our bodily senses, although it does not see wisdom" (*Phaedrus* 250d), since as stated before, the brightness of beauty in this world is more powerful than that of any other Form. Beauty is what is "most loved" (*Phaedrus* 250e) and is the most accessible Form for human beings. Thus, it is through the longing for beauty in the other that the soul is able to recollect its previous journey and what allows it to long for that ethereal, immaterial nature and the Forms of universality that go along with it: "the stream of beauty that pours into him through his eyes warms him up and waters the growth of his wings" (*Phaedrus* 251b). In the myth, love of beauty, quite literally, lifts the individual higher, allowing him to regain the ability he once had to come into contact with the Forms, or at least to long for them, as represented by the new re-growth of his wings, which he lost upon coming to the world. Thus, in the *Phaedrus*, "reminding is virtually tantamount to recollection itself" (Hyland 120), and most significantly, *love of the beautiful* becomes the key by which human beings are able to recollect, and thus, to *learn.* This ability to recollect is closely linked to our nature as erotic individuals. As explained in Aristophanes' story, we become erotic the second that we are no longer whole and we become aware of our division. From that moment on we long not only for our original nature, but for the state that allowed us to be somewhat closer to the divine, to transcendence. Our love of the Beautiful, especially our love of the temporal 'other,' is what prompts this act of recollection, as it reminds us of our original nature.

Whereas the white horse of the charioteer is "guided by verbal commands alone" (*Phaedrus* 253e), the more rebellious black horse is driven by its longing for beauty, and it is precisely the relentless nature of the black horse which allows the charioteer to see the Beautiful and to pursue it, which would not happen if the white horse had full command. In other words,

our *eros* for beauty *and* for wisdom is triggered by our appetite for what is beautiful, not just the immaterial, absolute beauty of truth, but the very real, immediate beauty that coexists with us and that reminds us of the universal *kalos* of the former. Although this movement might seem to be opposite to the movement described by Diotima in the *Symposium*, wherein seeing the Form of beauty gives us understanding of particulars, the movement is in fact cyclical in both. In the *Phaedrus* "seeing – and hence recognizing – beauty 'here' *reminds* us of beauty itself" (Hyland 82, emphasis in original), but it is also the initial *noesis* of beauty that allows us to partake in this recollection. The *Symposium* works in a similar manner; its process is cyclical yet explained temporally and learned one step at a time. It is through particular beauty that the journey begins at all, and once *noesis* of the Beautiful is achieved there is a return to this world in order to give birth in beauty, that is, to create beautiful particulars that will allow other individuals to embark on the same journey. Beauty thus "has the power to kindle in humans the divine madness that is *eros*" and it is this divine inspiration that "leads human beings to 'recollect' the forms […] Beauty speaks to the human mind of a higher realm" (Scott & Welton 142).

However, in the *Phaedrus,* this desire is referred to as madness: divine madness. This enthusiasm for the Beautiful, experienced in a physical manner, is what allows the lover to become "devoted to *ta erotika*; [to realize] that he has lost the beautiful and other good things that he had once glimpsed" (Belfiore 222). It is in this madness that the search for truth and philosophy merge with the desire for beauty, "the mad love of sensed beauty" (Tejera 44) that acts as the most important trigger for action. Like *eros* in the *Symposium,* which longs to fix the flaw of human nature, in the *Phaedrus* this is where the movement begins. Thus, erotic madness stands as the pre-linguistic root of our ability to express anything, and this ability comes from the search for beauty and wisdom. This 'divine madness' has a twofold component that other forms

of *eros* do not possess. Yes, it is regarded as madness: it is, to some extent, dangerous, relentless, wild, the personification of the black horse who goes crazy at the sight of the beautiful boy. But in another sense, it is *divine*, it allows us to *transcend* into the universal realm that is *not* human. The *eros* for beauty contains both elements and this dichotomy is precisely what grants *eros* its special quality as a *daimonic* messenger, which according to the *Symposium* leads us "in the direction of the true good, away from those pseudo-goods that merely appear good from a limited perspective" (Scott & Welton 142). All beauty in this world is bound to incite *madness*, as it is the most powerful reminder of something that does not make sense in this world. Erotic madness is thus both rational and entirely empirical, since it is necessary for philosophy, *learning*, to begin at all. For this reason Socrates states that "the best things we have come from madness, when it is given as a gift of the gods" (*Phaedrus* 244a).

Beauty's star is thus demonstrated to shine brightly in the sensible realm, a place where forms of truth and the Good have a hard time not only being beautiful, but being as noticeable or concretely manifested, whereas beauty reigns because of its obvious sensible manifestation: "justice and self-control do not shine out through their images here, and neither do the other objects of the soul's admiration" (*Phaedrus* 250b). As Socrates tells Phaedrus in the *Phaedrus*, the vision of wisdom would evoke the most intense kind of love in the soul, but it is unable to do so because of our incarnate state and the fact that wisdom does not translate into tangible manifestations in the sensible domain. On the contrary, in the sensible realm that we exist in, "now beauty alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible and the most loved" (*Phaedrus* 250d) of all the Forms, thus igniting *eros* in a way that no other Form is able to do.

3.3 Beauty's cognitive priority

Beauty is thus shown to have an innate ability to capture perception in such a way that it moves the soul and body together toward action; for example, as explained in the *Phaedrus*, it is the black horse of *eros* that moves the soul towards the beautiful boy that eventually triggers in the individual recollection of the Forms (254b), or for instance, it is Alcibiades' attraction to Socrates' beauty that causes him to examine his own life in a critical manner (*Symposium* 215e-216d). As Socrates states in his encomium, the insight into the Form of the Beautiful is both noetic and non-epistemic; that is, once the lover reaches the final step of her journey, the Beautiful is revealed in a purely immediate intellectual way, almost as if understanding were instantly absorbed by the lover via intuition alone. The lover thus far has undergone a process that moved her from one particular manifestation of beauty to another, thereby making the progression up to this point a process of epistemological advancement. This advancement is characterized by the lover's initial appreciation and attraction to a particular manifestation of the beautiful, therefore engaging with this instance and acquiring knowledge through her interaction. Simultaneously, the lover recognizes the initial lack, even as lesser manifestations of beauty are possessed. Ludwig Chen explains that this interval in each step of the ladder is required for the lover to become strong enough to withstand the revelation of the form of the Beautiful at the end of the ladder. He explains that the lover "must wait until he has been strengthened and grows by contemplating the vast sea of beautiful instances" (Chen 68), thus describing Diotima's ladder as an exercise not only in epistemology but in patience, as the lover must learn from each step before being able to receive the final divine revelation.

Beauty's ability to be recognized immediately by our perception is what gives it its cognitive priority. Since the appreciation of beauty is largely non-discursive and instantaneous,

we immediately assess something to be beautiful without much rationalization, whereas the assessment of wisdom, for example, is a longer process without the same degree of immediacy. Arguably, if we were able to experience wisdom in the same manner that we experience beauty, "it would awaken a terribly powerful love" (*Phaedrus* 250d), an *eros* that would be more powerful than that towards beauty, but that is unavailable to us because of our embodied nature. Since all human beings experience beauty in the particular, beauty is a form whose accessibility propels it to brighter status, especially as it includes and necessitates human particularity. Human beings, and human beauty, are taken up as part of the philosophical process, as this type of beauty speaks directly to our *eros*, bypassing our rational capacity and going straight to that which is the most primal for human beings: our desire to possess that which is beautiful.

Noticeably, Alcibiades does not understand that the process of acquiring wisdom takes time and effort, and thus he remains fixated in the first step of the journey, that is, in the attraction to a beautiful individual who in this case is Socrates. Instead of being strengthened by contemplation of "the vast sea of deindividualized instances which are all akin in being beautiful" (Chen 69), Alcibiades is weakened by his particular obsession, which provokes his further confusion. Furthermore, perhaps this is the reason why the Aristophanean mythical humans failed in their first attempt to acquire divine knowledge, as the transition they desired was violent and immediate in nature, and thus, not fit for their capacity. Diotima, in this case, expounds an epistemological movement that is both fit for human consumption and philosophical goals, as it involves the human fixation on beauty in its particular manifestations, as well as providing time to groom slowly the lover-philosopher towards the final metaphysical lesson. Consequently, every stage up to this point has required engagement and time. However, once the individual arrives to the culmination of her labours comprehension is acquired

instantaneously, as the nature of the Beautiful leaves no room for doubt or analysis; its nature commands *noesis* and exists purely at that level of direct knowledge. Moreover, it is here when the mind is able "to cross the ontic gap cognitively" (Chen 69) in an instant leap of perception, as a result of the slow and arguably nurturing process the lover takes up to this point.

Furthermore, even though the suddenness of the last jump to the Beautiful is described as non-discursive, what makes beauty so appropriate an engager of our *eros* is the fact that the initial attraction is also non-discursive and purely immediate. The description of the black horse going crazy at the sight of the beautiful boy in the *Phaedrus* conveys this concept conclusively. The white horse, *logos*, does not partake in this attraction whatsoever; in fact, the individual need not converse with the beautiful boy or know anything about his nature in order for the black horse to desire him purely based on perception. As Socrates states, vision is "the sharpest of our bodily senses," and it categorically "does not see wisdom" (*Phaedrus* 250d). It is *eros* that is ignited at the sight of the beautiful boy, preceding any discourse with him or any rationalization of desire within the soul of the observer. The vision of beauty alone is sufficient to cause this frenzy in the spectator. It is merely the fact that the boy participates in a Form that the horse recognizes from his pre-incarnation, i.e. the form of the Beautiful, what grabs the attention of the horse and ignites his desire. The white horse is not equipped to advance or to desire, but rather to try to moderate the desires of the black horse.

On its own, the white horse, pure rationality, will not lead the soul towards beauty, even if this beauty is meant to start the process of recollection in the soul. The white horse does not follow the beautiful because beauty works in an immediate non-discursive manner, and the white horse is "guided by verbal commands alone," in addition to being "a lover of honor with modesty and self-control" (*Phaedrus* 253e). When the soul sees beauty, even though "the entire

soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire," the white horse remains poised, preventing itself from acting (*Phaedrus* 253e). The black horse, on the other hand, becomes savage in his desire, jumping "violently forward and [doing] everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy" (*Phaedrus* 254b). It is the black horse that drives the soul forward to the encounter with the boy, so that the soul is reminded of the form of the Beautiful it once gazed at prior to incarnation, at the same time that it is reminded of self-control (*Phaedrus* 254b), so that the black horse stops his advances. However, he quickly desires to advance one more time, repeatedly, until the vision of beauty causes him to perish due to fright, and now the soul is able to follow the boy "in reverence and awe" (*Phaedrus* 254e), as opposed to purely longing for a physical encounter.

In other words, the purely rational element of the soul responds to pure *logos*, and as Socrates previously stated, vision does not recognize wisdom as it recognizes beauty, and thus, the sight of wisdom does not elicit the frantic response to beauty that the erotic element of the soul does. This frantic response is necessary in order to *move* the entire soul towards the experience of beauty so that the epistemological progression towards greater understanding, as seen in Diotima's ladder, for example, can begin. It is *eros* that allows the soul to come in contact with beauty in the first place, so that eventually the experience of the beautiful is no longer solely erotic and non-discursive, but an experience of rationalization and discourse as well, which allows the soul to progress epistemologically like the lover does in Diotima's ladder of love. *Eros* is the element of the soul required to process this vision of beauty, and once it does, the entire soul benefits, as the cognition of beauty nourishes the soul and "the whole soul seethes and throbs in this condition" (*Phaedrus* 251b).

The uniqueness of the movement into the appreciation of the Beautiful, starting non-discursively and moving into apprehension and understanding in every single step until it is revealed once again in a non-discursive and absolute manner, is what makes it stand out, as opposed to, for example, forms such as wisdom, that require the individual to approach them discursively and through an intellectual process. In this manner, the lover goes from the immediate attraction to a beautiful individual, to an understanding that this particular beauty exists in other bodies as well and then in laws and institutions, and then realizing this beauty once again in a non-discursive way, repeating the cycle in each step. The individual requires no understanding of beauty to want it, whereas in the case of goodness or justice, for example, understanding precedes desire[15], in addition to the fact that their sensible manifestations do not command attention in the way that particular beauty does. In fact, it is the non-discursive experience of beauty itself that leads to discursiveness, to the acquaintance with *logos*, which means rationality needs the experience of beauty to precede rational activity.

Ultimately, and most importantly for philosophical education, this non-discursive experience is capable of leading the individual to higher rational activity, and finally into *noesis* of the true form, which in turn encourages creation of sensible beauty that partakes in truth. This self-regenerating aspect of the beautiful makes the cycle start again, as the individual will now produce beauty that encompasses both truth and beauty, and which will engage more individuals to begin the journey, thus prompting philosophical discourse. In other words, beauty calls the soul into the philosophical journey, creating not merely philosophers, but lover-philosophers that not only desire the Beautiful, but love it, and in turn, love the Good and what is true as well, as we will examine in the next section.

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15. Though for Socrates this is not the case, as he believes individuals by nature desire the Good, even without knowledge of it.

3.4 Beauty's call to transcendence: how does beauty provoke critical inquiry?

Diotima's encomium can thus be seen as a new account of philosophical education - philosophical because the ultimate goal is knowledge - an education that is as beautiful and as appealing as the journey of the lover toward his beloved, in addition to being one that works adequately to address the nature of human beings and their erotic aspirations. Moreover, this philosophical education uses the Beautiful to lure the individual into the good life, and into acquaintance with less tangible forms such as goodness and truth. However, how does beauty do this? It seems that the thing with beauty is that it is always pointing beyond itself: from the perception of beautiful particulars, which point to a beauty that is more universal, to the cognition of the Beautiful Itself, which leads to creation of more beauty. Not only is beauty in a constant cycle of regeneration but it is persistently pointing the spectator beyond its own truth. For example, in his description, Alcibiades insists that he recognizes a beauty in Socrates that is out of this world, described with the metaphysical terminology proper to the Forms, so that it is clear that Alcibiades recognizes the beauty that he sees as surpassing the limitations of this world. Alcibiades himself recognizes that Socrates' beauty and what he offers is unparalleled in this world; he knows that this vision is encouraging him to move further, to leave his own shameful ways and rehabilitate his soul towards a path of virtue. It is in part Alcibiades' own fixation and miscommunication with Socrates that does not allow him to move further, but the flashing lights that stand high up on the ladder of love are flashing equally as bright for him as they do for anyone else.[16] The call of beauty to move beyond cannot be denied. Arguably, a mostly rational philosophical education, that is, one that elevates the intellectual entirely over the sensible, points beyond itself as well and perhaps with fewer of the dangers than beauty poses to

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16. This aspect of Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates is examined fully in the next chapter.

our erotic, and sometimes addictive nature. This occurs because philosophy engages mainly with the rational element of our soul that is associated with moderation and self-control. However, beauty points beyond itself in an almost unperceivable way, which can make the movement towards understanding an enjoyable one, albeit not entirely without pains, as Plato's portrayal of Alcibiades shows. The call of beauty is more present than is philosophy's call because it targets our entire nature, both embodied and spiritual, and that is why it is can be more powerful than a mostly rational education in this world, as it is capable of provoking the critical inquiry necessary to begin any epistemological advancement. Beauty can thus act as a paradigm for truth and the good in a manner that philosophy cannot.

To understand more explicitly the connection between beauty and critical inquiry it might be useful to examine some of the arguments that Elaine Scarry uses to connect the presence of beauty in this world to truth and justice in *On Beauty and Being Just*. In her book Scarry argues in favour of beauty's power not only to point beyond itself, but to aid in the bringing forth of justice in this world in a way that deeply echoes Plato. Scarry argues that when "something beautiful fills the mind [it] invites the search for something beyond itself, something larger or something of the same scale with which it needs to be brought into relation" (21). This means that in the face of beauty, the mind is not only reminded of something bigger in which this particular manifestation of beauty partakes – much like Socrates' explanation in the *Phaedrus* – but in addition it is encouraged to search, to begin an investigation into matters that surpass the object of cognition and the spectator themselves. In this manner beauty acts to remind and to incite wonder in the spectator, forcing her to "search for precedents and parallels, to move forward into new acts of creation, to move conceptually over, to bring things into relation, and [beauty] does all this with a kind of urgency as though one's life depended on it" (Scarry 21).

This urgency has been seen in the black horse of the *Phaedrus* and his manic desire to possess the object of his perception; it has been clear in Alcibiades' admiration for Socrates and his insistence to understand him under all means possible because he feels beside himself in his presence, as though his life has no meaning anymore and he was in the presence of something much bigger than himself. It is also seen in Aristodemus and Apollodorus, whose obsession with Socrates bring them in touch with philosophy in a way that would not be possible without him. In fact, Alcibiades' confession that he feels "beside himself" (*Symposium* 215e) when in the presence of Socrates is a perfect example of what Scarry means when she states that beauty prompts the mind to bring into relation all things, what is temporal to what is absolute, what is particular to what is universal. Alcibiades understands, for the first time in his life, that there is not only something beyond himself but something much bigger, and that if he embarks on the journey he can partake of this transcendence and it will make his life better and worth living.

Here the connection between beauty and truth arises more explicitly. When one cognizes beauty and searches for a precedent, for a connection to the particular beautiful object, such as Alcibiades trying to investigate and understand Socrates' beauty, one is at a loss, since there is no precedent or explanation for the beautiful object, only an endless search. Scarry explains that this occurs because "what is beautiful is in league with what is true because truth abides in the immortal sphere" (22); that is, a search for the precedence of beauty will take us to the same sphere as truth and the Good, the sphere that Platonically is referred to as the realm of the Forms, thus bringing the spectator of beauty from the sensible to the noumenal through the empirical experience of the beautiful. An example is Alcibiades statement that Socrates' beauty goes beyond the surface, that when he sees him 'open' he sees little statues of the gods, immortal beings residing within him (*Symposium* 217a), not a beauty that properly belongs in this world.

However, what is interesting is that in our search for precedence we cannot find it; beauty and its clarity "[do] not itself satiate our desire for certainty since beauty, sooner or later, brings us into contact with our own capacity for making errors" (Scarry 22). That is, with beauty, we struggle to understand what is true, to identify what we are cognizing, as made obvious in Alcibiades' reaction to Socrates, his inability to understand exactly what Socrates is trying to tell him, and the constant errors of judgment that he makes in regards to him, such as seducing him in an attempt to obtain his wisdom. Scarry explains that this reaction of the spectator in the face of a beautiful person, or object, explains why "beauty is a starting place for education" (22), as it makes the individual actively search for truth while understanding that he is very liable to error; that is, the individual begins to inquire about beauty critically, then to expand this critical inquiry into other aspects of his life.

It is important to note that this does not mean that beauty and truth are interchangeable, at least not in the phenomenal world, as I have previously mentioned. On the contrary, beauty is an ally to truth and aids in its attainment, commanding attention in a way that truth does not: "it is not that a poem or a painting or a palm tree or a person is 'true,' but rather that it ignites the desire for truth by giving us, with an electric brightness shared by almost no other uninvited, freely arriving perceptual event, the experience of conviction and the experience, as well, of error" (Scarry 38). What Scarry means is that in the particular experience of beauty our powers of inquiry are ignited; the incandescence of the manifestation of beauty, the magnitude of which is shared by no other form in the sensible realm, propels the individual into an investigation for its origin, for truth, so that it allows the individual to encounter error in this self-examination and analysis of the world. This movement is analogous to the actions of the soul in the presence of beauty as expounded in the *Phaedrus,* wherein the black horse is prompted to act and recollect

previously gained knowledge because of his attraction to the beautiful boy. Furthermore, this provocation to go *beyond*, to move into transcendence and greater understanding is the goal of the progression of the lover in the *Symposium*. The lover moves from the particular experience of beauty into each step because in each experience of beauty she expands her understanding of what is beautiful, and her inquiry develops until she comes in contact with the source of true beauty. Like Alessandra Fussi states, the lover in Diotima's account "is possessed by the desire to transcend opinion and appearance and reach beyond them to truth" (245), moving from a purely aesthetic experience to a philosophical understanding of truth.

In addition, beauty has the capacity to remove us from the center of our own world, which aids in the inducement of *aporia*, a key element for Socratic and Platonic methodology. Scarry mentions this theory in her explanation that beauty commands perceptual acuity in an unparalleled manner, as it requires from the spectator her complete attention. As Scarry explains, "it is as though beautiful things have been placed here and there throughout the world to serve as small-wake up calls to perception, spurring lapsed alertness back to its most acute level" (55). In the context of the *Symposium*, for example, Alcibiades sees Socrates and is alerted back to his own life, the perception of his beloved compels him to examine his life in ways that produce an increased perception of why he is living in a way that is far from desirable. This awakening not only occurs for Alcibiades, but is present in Phaedrus and Pausanias' account whereby lovers desire to be virtuous, and in Apollodorus and Aristodemus' devotion to Socrates as an intellectual sage. Furthermore, Scarry explains that when one sees beauty, one undergoes a "radical decentering" (77) that forces the individual no longer to regard himself as the centre of his world. This decentering occurs, again, due to beauty's ability to point beyond the individual, to lift him from the immediate into the universal. Beauty, as explained in the *Phaedrus*, makes

the individual grow wings, wings that figuratively stand for our newfound perception of something broader than ourselves. Scarry refers to this experience also as “opiated adjacency” (78), in other words, the act of experiencing beauty removes us from the center of our world, while simultaneously making us feel pleasure, since now we gain an appreciation of the world in relationship to the beautiful object; for example, Alcibiades examines his own life because of his experiences with Socrates. This sense of adjacency is what brings forth notions of one’s symmetrical relationship to the whole and to others, which aids in bringing about concepts such as justice and ethical fairness, for example. In addition to the connection to justice that Scarry examines, this sense of adjacency also induces *aporia*, as the individual is forced, like Alcibiades, to re-examine his own position in his life and in the world. This experience prompts the individual to admit no longer the self as the gravitational center and consequently, judge of truth. The self is thus compelled to understand and admit his own ignorance, his own particular instance in regards to the universality of what goes beyond; *aporia* is in fact induced.

Beauty is conclusively seen as a key element of the philosophical endeavor, leading the individual not only to a greater regard for the world, but for her place in the world, igniting a sense of wonder and *eros* for what is beyond which is the foundational step for philosophy. As Aristotle states in the *Metaphysics,* the search for philosophical explanation for what is beyond this world begins in the truth that “all men desire to know” (980a). This desire to know arises from the fact that as creatures of sensation the pleasure we take in our senses, particularly sight, “makes us know and brings to light many differences between things” (*Metaphysics* 980a). But perhaps all individuals are not aware of their desire to know, and it is through this exercise in sensible beauty, through the use of what Aristotle terms as our dearest and keenest sense, that they are capable of achieving this philosophical momentum. However, perhaps not all

individuals are capable of ascending up the ladder on their own; thus, even though the initial attraction to beauty is immediate, a training in beauty, such as the one that the lover undertakes when going up the ladder, might be possible and even necessary for some individuals. In the next chapter we will examine how beauty and philosophical education are combined so as to trigger this epistemological journey in the individual.

Chapter 4 Philosophy made *kalos*

4.1 Introduction: *eros,* beauty, and philosophical education

The connection between sensible beauty and our *eros* that we have analyzed in the previous chapter is shown to be more immediately powerful than any other kind of desire. The ability of sensible beauty to trigger *eros* towards it, combined with beauty's compelling power to evoke in the observer thoughts of what lies beyond, thereby leading the mind to thoughts of transcendence, instills in the individual a sense of belief in something other than what is perceptually immediate, thus eliciting philosophical inquiry. Sensible beauty's ability to act as a gateway toward a more complete account of beauty, as delineated in the previous chapters, makes beauty a powerful epistemological tool unlike no other. Beauty is what prompts the mind to go into action most effectively; it is what makes the lover of beauty – arguably, all lovers are lovers of beauty – *want* to move up the ladder of love that is also the ladder of knowledge and being. Beauty is also what makes this individual, whose *eros* is engaged in this journey, to *want* to give birth in beauty, Diotima's final step, wanting to create stimulating *kalos* offspring after contemplating the source of the beauty the individual first saw in the beginning steps. As delineated in the chariot myth of the *Phaedrus*, the black horse, *epithumia* itself, is the one element of the soul that initiates action time and time again, when it is reminded of the

transcendent beauty it once saw. This aspect of the individual that is frenzied about sensible beauty, the part that sees the beautiful boy and desires to know him and to possess him, the part of the soul that moves Alcibiades towards Socrates although the former does not recognize why, is the element that moves the soul and body forwards and towards more complete accounts of beauty and possession of this beauty, helping the white horse, pure *logos*, to discover this beauty as well.

This need for action is central for Plato's epistemological progression from lesser objects of knowledge to stable knowledge: if the philosopher is meant to move up the line, or ladder, from unstable objects of knowledge and thus, fluctuating beliefs, towards a stable object of knowledge that allows for *noesis*, then her *eros* must be properly engaged to begin this ascent in the first place. As stated in the *Symposium* and supported in the *Phaedrus*, *eros* is more properly attracted to beauty than to any other object of desire. The white horse in the *Phaedrus*, symbolizing our rational nature, does not act, but rather depends on desire to be moved towards action.

For the philosopher to be engaged in this epistemological movement, philosophy must seduce the senses in the same way that other disciplines do, which takes us back to the poetry versus philosophy quarrel, wherein poetry antagonizes philosophy because of its greater sensible appeal. According to Strauss, Socrates' encomium in the *Symposium* points towards the idea that to engage in philosophical activity is to "surrender to the truth without concern for one's dignity and without concern for even the noble, since the truth is not simply noble or beautiful but in a certain sense ugly" (Strauss 93). This statement can be broken down into two things: for one, philosophical beauty does not translate into the sensible as it might exist in the metaphysical; that is, truth for us is not necessarily beautiful, and it can even be ugly. As explained previously, the

undisputable beauty of the Good as a Form does not translate as beauty in the sensible, where good things are not necessarily striking or appealing as a result of their goodness. For example, donating money to charity instead of buying things one wants, most times, does not strike us as seductive an idea as investing in things for our own interest, as much as the goodness of the former is greater than the goodness of the latter; arguably, that action, if properly understood as the Good, would strike the individual as even more beautiful, but that rationalization does not occur easily. Consequently, philosophical endeavours, if one wants to equate them with the search for truth, will not appear as beautiful and appealing to an individual who is highly influenced by perception, as they would to a person if witnessed in their metaphysical glory, i.e. at the end of Diotima's ladder. It is only once the journey begins that the individual increasingly sees beauty in more than what is perceptible to the eye, achieving a greater understanding of beauty that encompasses the other Forms.

Secondly, and following from this first point, Strauss is referring to the very real burden of the philosophical journey on the individual, as it is indeed a *journey* and not an instant acquisition that is also pleasurable and thus attractive. As we see in Alcibiades' speech, he is burdened by his love for Socrates: the desire to examine his own life and the realization that his own life is indeed not worth living weigh on him, as he does not know how to proceed, nor has he the willpower to do so. On the contrary, Alcibiades would just like to acquire this virtue through his physical relationship with Socrates, in an immediate manner, even though what he is attracted to is Socrates' inner beauty, further showing how confused he is as to how to attain the virtue he sees in Socrates. The fact that the philosophical novice has to work hard to elucidate philosophical concepts and through intense intellectual engagement reach some sort of *noesis* is not as appealing to all kinds of individuals. In fact, the stark search for metaphysical truth with

no tangible incentive would only seem to be appealing to a sort of Kantian creature who is purely driven by deontological motivations. As a result of the lack of tangible incentives, many individuals do not embark on this journey at all. In turn, this means that there is a lack of creation and reproduction in what is truly beautiful according to Diotima's ladder, whereby the individual must achieve a greater understanding of beauty before going back down the ladder to give birth in beauty, i.e. create beauty with proper understanding. Conversely, there is a plethora of creative birth of beauty in the lower and sometimes misleading levels of *eikasia,* which although vacuous, are, not surprisingly, much more engaging.

Thus, to bring beauty into philosophy is to increase the appeal of philosophy to the masses, to the majority of souls who are lovers of beauty and lovers of the beauty in others, and who, through their search for what is beautiful, are unsuspectingly moving up the ladder of philosophical truth and desiring what is good. In this manner, the lover in Diotima's ladder image becomes a rare hybrid, a philosopher-lover who through *eros* of a beautiful other, or a beautiful thing, is led towards intellectual enlightenment. The connection between love and beauty, which is natural, is used by Diotima as an incentive for epistemological progression and as another way that individuals can achieve philosophical understanding. Without this phenomenal incentive, there would be no desire to engage in the ladder, unless the individual were supra human and less ruled by its dichotomous rational-erotic nature, such as the Platonic depiction of Socrates, or unless her soul were predominantly philosophical and the duty to truth and goodness were the sole incentive it needed.[17] Philosophy is thereby called to strike a balance between sensible beauty and truth, so that it can engage its students *and* move them towards the Beautiful in the same manner that the love for particular beauty provokes a greater understanding

17. Even in this case, it seems almost ludicrous to envision a sort of Kantian individual embarking on the learning of philosophy from a purely deontological perspective, devoid of any pleasure or desire to do so.

in Diotima’s account. If this is accomplished, the cycle of birth in beauty can flow infinitely and be accessible to more than to an intellectual elite.

In this chapter I will examine first the dangers inherent in the attraction to beauty to understand how it can pose limitations for philosophical inquiry before examining how it acts as a pedagogical tool for philosophy. In the first section I will examine the inherent danger within the attraction to sensible beauty by focusing on Alcibiades’ relationship to Socrates and his failed philosophical conversion. Through this examination I wish to shed light not only on how beauty can work against any epistemological advancement, but most importantly on the Platonic criticism of Socrates’ pedagogy, in addition to the overall Platonic criticism of philosophy. Next, I will examine the very real experience of beauty of Plato and Dante, to demonstrate how beauty need not be detrimental to philosophy but in fact can shape philosophical understanding in the way that Diotima delineates, by looking at works of beauty that follow the guidelines of Diotima’s encomium of love. From this, I will examine Plato’s discussion on what constitutes proper writing in order to find the place for beauty in philosophy, whereby beauty in the philosophical text should elicit the act of falling in love so that the lover begins the epistemological journey towards truth motivated by the incentive of beauty.

4.2 The dangerous side of sensible beauty: Alcibiades’ failed philosophical conversion

So far, we have examined the qualities of beauty that make it so perfect a tool for intellectual progression; the lover, through the particular experience of beauty is able to progress ontologically and epistemologically until he reaches the kind of knowledge that enables him to produce beauty that also contains truth. However, in order to comprehend fully how beauty can work as a pedagogical tool for philosophical inquiry, it is necessary to understand its limitations

and the inherent danger present within the desire for beauty. From Phaedrus' speech it was clear that love poses certain dangers: individuals can become immersed in their particular desire and disregard themselves and their community, or as the reaction of the guests to Agathon shows, people are quick to be fooled by outer beauty. In fact, it is precisely beauty's cognitive priority and its sensible accessibility that make it both useful and dangerous for critical inquiry. The problem of accepting particular beauty as a means to the universal form is that because of its cognitive priority it can sometimes command the individual's attention to the point that the movement up the ladder does not occur. As Socrates explains, and as I explained in section 3.2, as much as this *eros* is described as divine, it is also mad, which means that there can be dangerous implications when the *means* are taken to be the *end*; that is, when the particular medium is mistaken as the *telos* of love. In other words, the problem arises when *eros* seeks for a purely empirical teleology. *Eros*, the principle of harmony between the divine and the mortal realm is also the harmonizing activity within the city and between individuals; it is what keeps the whole together, driving potential into actuality. As such, it drives human beings from their state of potentiality, and ideally leads them towards an absolute actualization which for Plato could only exist in the noumenal, or at least in a more rational and less incarnate goal. In other words, as described in Diotima's ladder, *eros* has the ability to move us to a *noesis* of the Forms, or at the very least, it allows us to go past *eikasia.* The conflict arises when this goal is lost or blurred out and taken over by a particular affection, turning this *telos* away from the noumenal and into the physical.

As we have already seen, beauty has cognitive priority in the sensible over the perception of wisdom or justice, for example. It is precisely its luminosity in its corporeal form that attracts *eros* in such a compelling manner, and which can – and should – work for philosophical

purposes. Inherent in what makes it essential for philosophy lays its danger: a command of the senses so strong that it can take over the individual entirely. If this occurs, the ultimate goal of Platonic philosophy, achieving knowledge of the Good and the Beautiful, can be substituted by a finite *other*, which as shown in the *Symposium*, effectively prevents any enlightenment from occurring.

The most poignant example of this substitution is seen in the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates, wherein Alcibiades' desire for personal and intellectual growth is hindered by his insistence on viewing Socrates as the *sole* medium *and end* of his intellectual and erotic activity. As Scott & Welton state, "rather than simply having Socrates tell us about *eros*, Plato shows us a certain kind of *eros* in its embodied form, in the dramatic depiction of Alcibiades' frustrated love for Socrates" (163). Although this dynamic is also present in the relationship between Apollodorus and Socrates, and between Aristodemus and the latter, the most obvious failure is present in the relationship of Alcibiades, an individual whose erotic and intellectual potential surpassed that of his contemporaries, and who ultimately becomes one of the biggest disappointments to Athens.[18]

From Alcibiades' speech about Socrates we can deduce that their relationship is plagued by misunderstanding. On the one hand, Alcibiades sees great beauty in Socrates, a beauty that transcends the corporeal and that requires greater perceptual acuteness, and which he seeks to possess for himself even when he is confused as to how to attain it. On the other hand, Socrates

18. Alcibiades' many talents were common knowledge in Greece; in *Life of Alcibiades* Plutarch writes both about his beauty, that "flowered out with each successive season of his bodily growth," (5) and his "love of rivalry and the love of preeminence" (6) as the most prevailing of his many strong passions. Accordingly, Alcibiades' career was marred by his personal ambition and inconsistencies: he betrays Athens during the Peloponnesian War after being accused of mutilating the statues to Hermes and profaning the Eleusian mysteries, to then betray Sparta and flee to Persia, to then betray Persia and return to Athens. Ultimately, he dies devoid of the glory his potential and political ambition could have given him.

fails to communicate to Alcibiades how to obtain this virtuous nature that he sees in Socrates and desires to imitate, and merely resorts to ignoring his seductions without further explanation. The problem as manifested in this relationship is thus twofold: on one side, we have Alcibiades' error in taking Socrates to be the end of his philosophical journey, and on the other side we have Socrates' pedagogical failure with one of his brightest and most promising students. As Cooksey puts it, Alcibiades "comprehends snatches of the Socratic music, but is tone deaf, unable to harmonize his soul with that of Socrates" (109). The student needs Socrates to show him the way, but it seems *both* are tone deaf to each other. I will first examine Alcibiades' manner of approaching Socrates to understand why he views Socrates as the end of his philosophical pursuit, and then I will inspect Socrates' attitude to Alcibiades to understand why he fails in his pedagogical role. This examination will shed light on the effect that sensible beauty can have on human beings in order to understand how it can work for any philosophical or pedagogical purpose.

For the first time in his life it seems, Alcibiades, the most beautiful man in Athens and the individual who is used to getting what he wants, is at a loss. Not only is he in the unusual role of the *erastes* who chases the beautiful youth, a role he would not have taken up seeing as *he* was usually the one chased, but his *eromenos*, a man older and less physically attractive than he, refuses him without explanation! This odd repartition of roles makes no sense in the ancient Greek convention; according to this layout, the utilitarian aspect of this traditionally pedagogical 'pederasty' – the exchange of beauty for wisdom represented in the affiliation between a beautiful youth and an older wise man – is lost. The *erastes* is supposed to lack beauty, not to possess it! This overturn of the Greek values of *kaloskagathia* ('goodness' derived from the words καλός, και and ἀγαθός: beautiful and good) is intended to serve as a critique of the

widespread notion of external beauty equating to a *kalos* nature, a problem seen in Agathon's speech as I have delineated, which both Plato and Socrates see as misleading. Through Alcibiades' recognition of the *kalos* soul of Socrates a new liaison is introduced: one where the *erastes*, lacking beauty of the *soul*, recognizes this beauty in another, and actively seeks the virtue and the person as his *eromenos.* Socrates is thus described as Silenic in appearance and resembling the satyr Marsyas, yet possessing the most temperate and virtuous interior, an image that opposes the Greek values of *kaloskagathia.* Alcibiades, conversely, acts as *eros*, the *daimonic* entity who lacking beauty strives for it as resourcefully as possible. As we can see, this is the proper relationship to the Beautiful as described by Diotima; in fact, Alcibiades foregoes the initial steps of desiring the beauty of the body and jumps straight into loving the beauty of Socrates' soul, his virtuous nature. Cooksey thus argues that "the idealized erotic of Diotima is mapped onto the actual erotic of Alcibiades" (117), referring to Alcibiades' bypassing of Socrates' body to go straight to what matters most in Diotima's scheme, his soul.

Even if Alcibiades does not fulfill this ideal to the fullest, i.e., he fails to be moved to the next steps up the ladder, the creation of beautiful *logos*, he stands as an example of how the particular individual participates in the form of the Beautiful in order to move individuals through beauty. A testament to Alcibiades' confusion – and erotic potential – is the fact that, although aware that he is in love with Socrates' *virtue*, he seeks it in a purely physical and erotic manner. As we have explained before, the false conception of wisdom or virtue being transferable via physical means is recurrent, and it seems that not even Alcibiades can escape it. Upon being charmed by Socrates he decides to seduce him, explaining that he: "slipped underneath the cloak and put [his] arms around this man – this utterly unnatural, this truly extraordinary man – and spent the whole night next to him" (*Symposium* 219c). Like Agathon,

Alcibiades assumes “that knowledge flows by contact, like some kind of fluid, [and he] hopes that through intimate contact with Socrates the contagion of wisdom will infect him” (Scott & Welton 171). Moreover, a man as beautiful as Alcibiades knows no other way to approach another in this kind of relationship: as a highly covetable *eromenos* this procedure of physical interaction is the only one to which he has been accustomed. As such, he explains: “all I had to do was to let him have his way with me, and he would teach me everything he knew – believe me, I had a lot of confidence in my looks” (*Symposium* 217a).

However, to his surprise, all Alcibiades receives in return is rejection: “But in spite of all my efforts, this hopelessly arrogant, this unbelievably insolent man – he turned me down!” (*Symposium* 219c). The problem with this exchange is that it is unequal in its terms. Alcibiades’ recognition of his own beauty leads him to value it highly, and thus he sees it in equal standing to the beauty he aims to obtain from Socrates. Kofman describes this recognition as Alcibiades’ “presumptuousness” (21) in his attempt to exchange both as equal commodities, to offer superficial and decaying physical beauty for the most lasting and stable beauty of the soul; this is an exchange that Socrates cannot grant.

Understandably, Alcibiades feels outraged that his physical beauty has been denied – arguably, for the first time: “He spurned my beauty, of which I was so proud, members of the jury” (*Symposium* 219c). Because of this rejection Alcibiades labels Socrates as arrogant and proud (*Symposium* 219d) and yet cannot help but admire Socrates’ extraordinary self-control: “here was a man whose strength and wisdom went beyond my wildest dreams!” (*Symposium* 219d). Alcibiades is at a loss, and he does not know where to proceed from here, mainly because he sees Socrates not only as the source of virtue, but the end of it; Alcibiades takes up Socrates as *his* own good, and this becomes problematic for his learning process. As he explains, the

moment that Socrates leaves him he forgets his desire to be good, and the shame over his habits that Socrates inflicts on him and that motivates him to change is no longer as pressing (*Symposium* 216b). Alcibiades' love for Socrates makes him feel shame, and he experiences "disharmony between his nature and experience" (Cooksey 103), an occurrence so unusual for him that he is quick to view Socrates as an individual whose powers surpass human limitation.

Both Berg and Kofman accuse Apollodorus and Aristodemus of doing what Alcibiades does: glorifying Socrates to a super human level. Apollodorus is criticized for believing that Socrates and his philosophy are the only things worth following, for making Socrates into "a new god: a god made man" (Berg 5). In this case, Apollodorus would be doing exactly what Alcibiades is doing, but with different consequences, perhaps due to the different level of erotic potential, ambition, and confidence in both individuals. Similarly, Kofman states that both Apollodorus and Aristodemus are better narrators than philosophers, as they are mainly focused on Socrates himself: "they are more in love with Socrates, whom they idolize, than they are with *sophia*" (16). It seems that these three individuals fail to move to the stage of creation in beautiful ideas, as they either do not move at all, or merely replicate Socrates: "[they] imitate Socrates' words and deeds but are not able to acquire the erotic art that is essential to his practice of philosophy" (Belfiore 116). That is, they engage in the initial progression of the ladder but are unable to move forward, which is not bad, just not ideal for philosophy as there is no critical inquiry. Thus, the three are unable to move properly into philosophy, but Alcibiades' focus on Socrates as the end of his pursuit prevents him in a much more intense way than that of Aristodemus and Apollodorus who are at least somewhat engaging in philosophical activity.

The language that Alcibiades uses to describe Socrates almost depicts him as a transcendent creature, more apt to participate in the divine realm and closer to a Form than to a

human being. For instance, Alcibiades mentions Socrates' incredible demonstrations of super human qualities and delineates Socrates' atypical *sophrosune* in relation to food, sleep, and sexual activity, describing him as a borderline transcendent entity not subject to time or space. According to his description, Socrates is capable of withstanding hunger better than anyone else in the army when Athens invaded Potidaea (*Symposium* 220a), yet he enjoys a banquet like no other, drinking and feasting without ever incurring in rapaciousness or inebriation, demonstrating a superhuman quality of self-control and resistance. In addition, Socrates is described as borderline immune to the elements, walking barefoot in the snow better than others who did not even dare to "[stick their] nose outside" (*Symposium* 220b). Socrates seems to resist everything that would normally inflict some emotion or pain, and unlike the majority of individuals he can be engaged in contemplation for hours without distraction: "he stood on the very same spot [all night contemplating] until dawn!"(*Symposium* 220d). The language that Alcibiades chooses to describe his *eromenos* points to his substitution of the form of the Beautiful with Socrates, as he borderline attributes qualities of the Forms, such as being unaffected by sensible contingencies, to a temporal individual immersed in flux. Alcibiades also explains that Socrates saved his life, and not only rescued him but made sure to bring his armor as well: "he just refused to leave me behind when I was wounded, and he rescued not only me but my armor as well" (*Symposium* 220e). This is an interesting detail as it conveys Socrates' interest in not just the individual, but in physical objects and the honour that the armor represents.

Moreover, Alcibiades describes the hypnotic power of Socrates' words and their ability to possess individuals (*Symposium* 215d) who feel enraptured by his words as if he was some sort of hypnotizing pied piper. Alcibiades goes to the extent to argue that Socrates' words make him feel inebriated (*Symposium* 215e), and he explains that Socrates' oratory produces a shift in

his nature that makes him feel beside himself in a state that resembles religious frenzy. In this manner he compares himself to the followers of Cybele, who would partake in orgiastic rituals when they felt overcome by the goddess through music and dance. For Alcibiades, this frenzy occurs through Socrates' words alone, and the comparison conveys Alcibiades' view of himself as a disciple of Socrates, who resembles a god in his hypnotizing power over mortals. Furthermore, Alcibiades tells his audience that he once managed to glimpse inside Socrates and saw the godlike figures he hides inside himself, a sight that made him follow him without hesitation (*Symposium* 217a). Through Socrates Alcibiades claims to have been "struck and bitten by philosophy" (*Symposium* 218a), yet he fails to realize he has really been struck and bitten by *Socrates*, who he sees as a Form in himself. As Alcibiades states, Socrates is "unique; he is like no one else in the past and no one in the present" (*Symposium* 221c), he has no human parallel (*Symposium* 221d) and is almost, for him, a Form in himself, an individual so utterly unique and suprahuman he seems to exist in a different world altogether.

In this manner, Socrates is able to overturn the classical *erastes-eromenos* specifications, seducing individuals like Alcibiades with a beauty that transcends his physical nature: "he has deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you're in love with him yourself!" (*Symposium* 222b). Steven Berg argues that Alcibiades believes "that Socrates alone embodied the truth of the beautiful that he understands to be identical with the truth of the divine: according to Alcibiades' drunken praise, Socrates is the one true, if hidden, god" (133). Therefore, Alcibiades' appreciation of Socrates' spiritual beauty is what leads him to mistake this particular manifestation with the whole, and what prompts him to seek Socrates in the same frenzied and fervently religious manner as he should be pursuing philosophy. As Scott & Welton point out, Alcibiades is the perfect example of why it takes more than "manic enthusiasm" (29),

such as that exhibited by Apollodorus, to become a philosopher, since manic enthusiasm many times can lead to blind adherence. Moreover, Fussi argues that Alcibiades' response of instant submission to Socrates reveals that he remains "entrapped in his own main obsession, the struggle between master and slave" (253) as opposed to embracing the position of student so that he can acquire the knowledge for which he longs.

Through this eulogy to the semi-divine qualities of Socrates, Alcibiades separates the philosopher from the rest of the individuals present – and even ones not in attendance, such as Pericles (*Symposium* 215e) - identifying his otherworldliness and juxtaposing it with the worldliness of everyone else. It is, in fact, this otherworldly quality that Alcibiades detects and longs to imitate, yet his worldliness is too engrossing and prevents him from recognizing that this quality cannot be achieved corporeally, or merely as knowledge poured from one vessel to another. No, the Socratic virtue that this inconceivable *erastes* longs for is attained through a *process*, and failing to realize this is Alcibiades' greatest frustration. As Cobb explains, much of the misunderstanding between these two individuals arises from the fact that they operate in different epistemological and ontological levels, thus failing to see eye to eye: "Alcibiades is still operating on the lowest level of Diotima's staircase, while Socrates is at the highest level, engaging in the creation of beautiful conversations" (83). In other words, while Alcibiades is fixated on the beautiful individual as the object of his *eros,* Socrates is at the stage where he engages with beautiful *logos* and conversation, effectively placing them at two different extremes of the epistemological route that *eros* takes. Due to this inability to communicate, Alcibiades is at a loss when Socrates is not around, as he loses cognitive and physical sight of the end, of the goal that Socrates would lead him towards.

The danger of fixation is thus inherent in all particular manifestations of the Beautiful. In

a way, this can be compared to admiring a painting for nothing more than the technical skill, yet entirely missing the symbolism the painter was trying to convey. Alcibiades fails to recognize that Socrates is not the end of his philosophical education, but simply the way to what he wants to achieve. Cooksey explains that Alcibiades lacks the "patience and persistence" (122) required for the ascent to the Beautiful, in a movement that is comparable to that of the less-able charioteer in the *Phaedrus.* Socratic wisdom is far from a process but rather a movement; Socrates can only guide but not physically move Alcibiades. Not even his inner beauty is enough enchantment or motivation for his student. Not obtaining immediate pleasure, Alcibiades abandons "the struggle and return[s] to the cave" (Cooksey 122-3), accepting a particular representation of beauty as the Form in itself.

However, as much as Alcibiades fails as a student, Socrates fails as a teacher; it is precisely his otherworldliness that simultaneously attracts and alienates Alcibiades, who does not know how to communicate with an individual who does not clearly convey the reasons why he is rejecting him. According to William Cobb, Socrates tries to "assist in the beautification of Alcibiades' soul" (83) by rejecting his physical advances and trying to engage him in conversation. This is true. However, a point that Cobb misses is that Socrates' attempt at beautifying Alcibiades' soul is doomed from the beginning, as it does not properly address Alcibiades' primarily thumoeidetic personality. As a keen observer of human nature and as a lover of Alcibiades – as stated before, Socrates clearly cared for Alcibiades' body *and* soul – Socrates recognizes that his student is primarily affected by a strong *thumos,* one that manifested itself in political ambition and the strong nature of his physical desires. In this case, Socrates' otherworldliness distances him from engaging Alcibiades with philosophy, as he fails to reroute the object of his *eros* in an effective manner. It is from the greatest potential for philosophy that

Alcibiades falls into the greatest betrayal; he is a man so equipped with "all the gifts required for "philosophy"" (Taylor 233) who is also extremely susceptible to cognitive and sensible temptations. Taylor describes Alcibiades as "the man who might have 'seen' if he would" (233), the individual who, although attracted to Socrates' virtue, chooses worldliness. Moreover, Martha Nussbaum argues that Alcibiades' speech is meant to correct the "one-sided otherworldliness of Socrates' speech" (Cobb 64) so that both speeches act to balance each other out. She believes that Alcibiades' function in the dialogue is to serve as a Platonic criticism of the potential danger of Socrates' nature, a nature that alienated the city and failed to move one of the students with the highest erotic potential. Alcibiades' potential was so high, in fact, that a lack of proper direction of his *thumos* could result in disastrous consequences, something that happened when his *eros* become solely directed to political ambition. Ideally, Alcibiades' worldliness would harmonize with Socratic otherworldliness to strike the balance needed for dialectic and philosophical inquiry, in addition to the proper relation between them, but both individuals fail to achieve this equilibrium.

C.D.C Reeve refers to the juxtaposition of Alcibiades with Socrates as upward versus horizontal blindness. He argues that Socrates, as a philosopher, is horizontally blind; that is, he fails to recognize his interlocutor because his *eros* is exclusively directed upwards, towards what is universal: "his rational desires, his self-defining love for the truth, pull his soul up towards the forms" (Reeve 157). As Cobb will argue, Socrates' way of life "is inappropriate as a human ideal" (Cobb 63), as it makes him stand out and fail to communicate with others in an explicit manner; i.e. sometimes his actions are misunderstood (see *Apology*) and sometimes his lack of actions are (see Alcibiades' confusion about how to seduce him in the *Symposium*). Other examples of this behaviour are his catatonic practice of contemplation that arouse the curiosity of

his comrades in battle (*Symposium* 220d), or the fact that his constant abstraction makes him forego social custom, such as when he gets lost in thought and does not accompany Aristodemus to see Agathon[19], which puts both in an embarrassing scenario as Aristodemus was not invited to the banquet (*Symposium* 174e). On a more serious side, Socrates' actions alienate a city with the qualities that make him stand out from the rest of mortals, which ultimately results in his death.

Conversely, at the other end of the spectrum, Alcibiades' upward blindness fixates him on the corporeal, a sight so powerful that blinds him, in an allegorical manner, to every step up the line and into stages of higher ontological and epistemological status. Individuals like Alcibiades "see sharply the beauty of bodies, but their sexual appetites, which cause upward blindness, prevent them from moving on from there to any other kind of beauty" (Reeve 159). Thus, Alcibiades remains fixated on what is temporal and fluctuating, and as a result, any knowledge that he obtains is marred by this lack of stability: the quality of his thought is directly affected by the object he desires. For Reeve the cause of this blindness is not "ophthalmic, but appetitive" (157), that is, it has less to do with cognition and more to do with where desire is being directed. However, I would argue that it is more than just an appetitive tendency that makes each individual 'blind' to each other, but also a lack of proper re-education of desire. Even though I agree with Reeve's categorization of Alcibiades and Socrates' 'blindness,' when

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19. Kofman argues that "when [Socrates] detaches Aristodemus and sends him on ahead, the act symbolizes the spiritual detachment that Socrates is trying to achieve, the goal of which is to incite the twin to pull away, to cut the umbilical cord, for the greater good of both disciple and master" (14). This analysis is interesting in light of Socrates' pedagogical failures: how clear is this symbolic act for Aristodemus? In other words, how much does he learn from it? This symbol sheds light on the apparent lack of clearness of Socrates' teachings, which can translate into misunderstanding with his students, as is the case with Alcibiades. Furthermore, how successful would this act be if Agathon were not as gracious a host as he is, i.e. jumping to invite Aristodemus to the dinner under the pretext that he 'forgot' to invite him (174e). Had he not been this well-mannered Socrates' abstraction would have cost Aristodemus his spot in the banquet, thus prompting him to miss out on the philosophical discussion.

he attributes this characteristic to the order of their desires he overlooks the fact that Alcibiades' whole encomium focuses on the beauty of Socrates' *soul*, and the fact that Socrates is known as a lover of beautiful *people*. As has been stated earlier, Alcibiades sees a beauty in Socrates that surpasses Socrates' physical appearance, and conversely, Socrates enjoys physical beauty and acknowledges materiality as important, as demonstrated in the detail of rescuing Alcibiades *and* his armor from war. Thus, I believe it is in great part a pedagogical failure that Alcibiades' upward blindness is not cured, and a criticism that Plato must be imputing to Socrates through his writing.

Hyland argues that Socrates forgets the beginning in the corporeal in his pursuit of Forms, and thus does not properly address and redirect the physical advances of Alcibiades, prompting Alcibiades to criticize him. This flaw, for Hyland, is a "Platonic criticism of Socrates" (62) as a teacher, and I think he is correct in this assessment. At the time when Apollodorus is relaying the dialogue, the betrayal of Alcibiades is already well-known; hence, his failure to achieve Socratic virtue is already common knowledge to anyone reading the dialogue. Plato, through this depiction, is criticizing Socrates' short-sightedness and inability to re-route Alcibiades' *eros* from political ambition and towards virtue, criticizing a major flaw in Socrates' pedagogical approach. Socrates' otherworldly qualities convey that he has already witnessed the vision of the Beautiful and is at the stage of creation in true beauty. Taylor argues that for this reason he "impresses his fellow-men by his whole bearing as being not of their world though he is in it" (232). As such Socrates has achieved the greater mystery as described by Diotima and came back to give birth in beauty *here,* yet sometimes seems to forget that others do not understand the Beautiful in the way he does, and as such he needs to guide others as much as he can since they are prone to mistake his beauty for the thing in itself.

Criticizing Socrates for failing to channel all of Alcibiades' potential into good is not a capricious responsibility we are assigning to him. On the contrary, all throughout Platonic literature we are presented with the association between Socrates and midwifery, an image that is very much present in the *Symposium.* In the *Theaetetus*, one of Plato's middle dialogues and arguably his foundational text on epistemology, Socrates describes himself as an intellectual 'midwife': a person capable of bringing forth the ideas and thoughts of those 'pregnant' with wisdom but who are unable to give birth to their ideas on their own. Socrates himself is the son of Phaenarete[20], a midwife, and he explains to Theatetus that he possesses the same ability that his mother possessed, only his midwifery is of a different sort. The midwife, by definition, is sterile; the idea behind this assumption is that the individual who has the skills to help women give birth has learned those skills due to her own inability to get pregnant or because they are past child-bearing age. Socrates explains to Theatetus that "women never practice as midwives while they are still conceiving and bearing children themselves. It is only those who are past child-bearing who take this up" (*Theatetus* 149b). Under this definition, Socrates likens his own skill to that of the midwives. First of all, he is able to recognize when an individual is 'pregnant' with ideas, just like the midwife recognizes better than anyone else "whether women are pregnant or not" (*Theatetus* 149d). Secondly, Socrates has the ability to "bring on the pains" of intellectual childbirth, and also, "to relieve them" (*Theatetus* 149d) when necessary, like the midwives who are able to do the same with the pregnant women they assist. Socrates states that the only difference between both arts is that he services men and not women, but most importantly, that he takes care "over the labor of their souls, not their bodies" (*Theatetus* 150b). Therefore, while the midwives take care of physical births, Socrates attends those who are

20. Literally, 'she who brings virtue to light'.

pregnant in soul or intellect and require his assistance as a mentor or teacher. Through this performance Socrates is able to detect whether the individual is possessed by phantoms or by truths, and thus is able to root out 'evil' pregnancies of the soul from fertile ones.

The philosopher, as a midwife to the soul, is able to 'cure' the individual of infertile offspring and attempt to eliminate those ideas that carry little truth or little potential for virtue. This midwifery is what Socrates should have employed to prevent Alcibiades' fixation or to reroute it towards philosophy, as this fixation is an inherent danger of particular beauty that prevents philosophical progression. This idea is fully developed in Epicurus, whose philosophical model highly resembled medicine; Epicurus' idea of philosophy as a *pharmakon* used to relieve human suffering appears as a development of the image of the Socratic midwife. The philosopher is now a doctor for the soul, which echoes Eryximachus' allusion to the physician as able to achieve this spiritual balance. In this manner, only the philosopher, who possesses greater knowledge of the soul, is able to differentiate unstable thoughts from stable ideas and through the stable logos move her subject towards a more enlightened state.

Following this logic Socrates claims that he is "barren of wisdom" (*Theatetus* 150c), as only through his barrenness he would be able to provide this service to those who are not. Socrates thus helps individuals to "discover within themselves a multitude of beautiful things" (*Theatetus* 150d) so that they are able to bring them forth; in the terminology of the *Symposium*, Socrates assists individuals to *give birth in beauty,* to create in truth and beauty within in order to turn potentiality into actualization. Socrates' pedagogical failure with Alcibiades is thus a failure that he commits as a midwife to the soul. In failing to assist Alcibiades' intellectual birth Socrates fails as a midwife, as he does not properly guide Alcibiades' offspring from fertile and potential truths into actual beauty. As Socrates explains in the *Phaedrus*, "not every soul is easily

reminded of the reality there by what it finds here" (*Phaedrus* 250a), since the body acts as an impediment to true vision. Yet, beauty can be used in our favour if we have a good midwife to help us find the true vision that surpasses mere physical perception.

4.3 Giving birth in beauty: Plato and Dante

Plato's depiction of the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates not only demonstrates what happens when an individual takes particular beauty to be the end goal, or when the person in the position of teacher fails to move the student forward. On a symbolic and more comprehensive level the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates demonstrates the very real limitations of both *eros* of beauty and philosophy's ability to capture would-be philosophers. In the previous chapter we already examined the limitations of more traditionally philosophical forms, such as virtue or justice, when compared to sensible beauty; Scott& Welton term this disadvantage the "tragic limits" of wisdom, a Form which ideally should govern, but that "is in a very real sense impotent" (176), especially when compared to the appeal of sensible and poetic beauty.

Moreover, the distraction caused by sensible beauty is not just present in the beauty of individuals, as examined in the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates, but it is also present in art forms that actively compete with philosophy, such as poetry and literature. As we have seen, philosophy's ability to *move* its audience is limited, while poetry possesses these tools in abundance. The poet, through his ability to beautify speech, has the power not only to make *logos* appealing, but to "make himself the beautiful god Eros" (Berg 88); that is, the poet is skilled enough to make *himself* and his poetry appear to be divinely beautiful, and thus he commands the attention and dedication of his devotees. The philosopher, lacking this 'rock star'

quality that the poet emanates through his words, is left in a less glamorous role, relegated to a supporting part in the poet's show. Part of the poet's 'trick' is his ability to beautify what might not be beautiful – which is reminiscent of the sophist Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus* - and to deliver a convincing image of what is *kalos* to his audience, which the philosopher has trouble doing, as wisdom is arguably a harder thing to beautify. For example, through his poetic expertise, Agathon fashions a god after his own image and craft, one that is as beautiful as he himself and as deep as his poetry. However, the problem is not the fact that he is equating the Beautiful with the Good, but rather that he brings an eidetic condition to the realm of becoming, where the Beautiful does not equate to the Good. Consequently, he forges an association of beauty and goodness that is not applicable to this world and that is much more convincing than the idea of virtue that philosophy might present.

Perhaps this hierarchy is what prompts Socrates to make himself beautiful to be in the presence of a beautiful man (*Symposium* 174a); not only is the philosopher going to be competing against the poet in looks – a competition that Agathon has already won by a landslide - but he is going to try to steal the spotlight away from images of beauty and good to the Beautiful and Good in themselves. This task is difficult if not nearly impossible, since we know that the poets employ all means to make the beauty of their words shine as radiantly as possible, whereas philosophy must rely on the *truth* of its words to portray beauty.

However, Socrates manages to achieve exactly this; his speech shines brightly in sensible beauty just as much as in the beauty of its truth. In fact, his speech and Agathon's are the only ones that generate the same results: spontaneous and fervent applause. Yet, Plato does not make his victory clear; although he appears to win against Aristophanes and Agathon in endurance at the end of the celebration, Alcibiades' impromptu appearance and subsequent criticism point to a

larger and more complex Platonic critique of philosophy. Not only is beauty more appealing, but philosophy, like Socrates, can be too *otherworldly.* The problems seen in the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates are present in the relationship between the individual and philosophy, such as the individual finding the philosophical endeavour too unearthly and devoid of the necessary tangible rewards to maintain the interest of his *eros.* In the competition between beauty and philosophy, the latter wins epistemologically, yes, *but* this victory is not enough: philosophy must win over the senses as well, in order to correct the one-sided, otherworldly approach it takes and to trigger the *eros* for beauty that is inherent in *all* human beings. Philosophy, like Socrates, must not be too otherworldly, but rather a balance must be struck so that the endeavour appeals both to the rational and erotic aspects of the individual so as to not incur the same pedagogical problem that Socrates faces with Alcibiades. Philosophy, then, must make itself *kalos*. Not merely beautiful to attract individuals, but its beauty must be a synthesis of the sensible beauty and the beauty of *aletheia* in such a way as to lead human beings into virtue. Philosophy's beauty must become the gateway to the Beautiful so as to be able to compete with the beauty that shines brightly but that might not work for the betterment of the soul and that might not be true. In this manner, the innate love for the beautiful present in human beings must become the way by which individuals access philosophy.

Ideally, then, philosophy must be beautiful in order to replicate in a way the process of falling in love, or the experience of recognizing beauty in an 'other,' which marks the beginning steps of Diotima's epistemological movement. So far, we have only seen this movement in action in fictional depictions that although accurate in what they symbolize, are not real life examples, in addition to being incomplete – neither Alcibiades, nor Aristodemus, nor Apollodorus move towards the final step of creation. In the previous section we examined in-

depth a famous account of a love of beauty gone wrong – the unusual *erastes-eromenos* story of Alcibiades' love for Socrates, a love that in spite of its intensity and of being focused on something that surpassed corporeal attraction, failed to move the *erastes* into intellectual or spiritual improvement. We also saw that in fact, Alcibiades seems to be the exception to the rule: not only is he in an exceptional position to be anyone's *erastes*, but in most cases, love or experience of beauty does lead people towards some good – or just better – life, as is the case of Aristodemus and Apollodorus who engage in philosophical activity thanks to Socrates. Arguably, one could say that even though Alcibiades failed to move towards the kind of creation that marks the culmination of the ladder of love, he in fact did move up the ladder. This movement is due to the fact that he recognizes a beauty in Socrates that exceeded the latter's physical limitations and that moved Alcibiades towards self-analysis, an activity that evokes the value that Socrates places on inquiry as the basis for a worthy life.[21] Through the experience of particular love, Socrates' three 'disciples,' Alcibiades, Aristodemus, and Apollodorus, do go past the initial stage of recognizing the beauty of bodies in order to appreciate the beauty of the soul, and – some - are led into philosophical activity as a result.

Perhaps the major criticism that might be made of them is that they all fail to move into the stage of creation, and they are all somewhat obsessed with Socrates; maybe this is due to a failure of Socrates' midwifery, or maybe these individuals are not 'pregnant in soul.' The truth is that their fixation on Socrates makes them develop an upward blindness that stagnates their intellectual movement. Consequently, we can learn from these examples that the key is to begin the journey in the particular experience, but not to confuse it with the end. Since we have already examined accounts of philoso-lovers who do not reach the end even though they are moved

21. See Plato's *Apology*.

higher, I want to provide two real-life examples of authors whose journeys resemble and actualize Diotima's theory of *eros* and beauty. Through an examination of Plato, Socrates' other famous student, and Dante Alighieri I want to show how the love of particular beauty can move the individual not only towards a life of philosophical examination, but perhaps most importantly, to a regeneration of beauty through artistic and philosophical creation, without leaving the particular behind, but incorporating it in the process.

In examining Plato and Dante as authors I want to move the discussion from the theoretical to the practical. I could borrow from literature persuasive examples of individuals whose love of beauty moves them towards good, towards heroism, towards justice; but, in order truly to appreciate the pedagogical role of beauty and the way it moves our *eros* we must be able to examine it in the context of real life. Plato and Dante are suitable examples because they are successful authors who have managed to achieve immortality through their creations, an idea that is referred to in the *Symposium* when Diotima talks about the desire to possess the object of love infinitely. Both Plato and Dante, as separated as they are by time, have similarities in regards to their source of inspiration and the intellectual movement that they follow that precedes their intellectual creations; these similarities attest to the movement of *eros* in the doctrine of love delineated in Diotima's encomium, and shed light on the actual role of love and beauty for the betterment of the individual. Consequently, the movement of *eros* as described in Diotima's eulogy, and seen in an incomplete form in Alcibiades' love for Socrates, can be appreciated fully in the lives and artistic progressions of the aforementioned writers. These authors go through a movement similar to what occurs to the *erastes* in the ladder of love, who from a particular experience of love and beauty is inspired and led into a transcendent cognition and *noesis* of the Forms, and ultimately to produce in beauty.

Starting in the love experienced in the particular, both authors focus their creations on a specific individual who serves not only as a source of inspiration, but as the gateway to a greater understanding of the possibility of transcendence. For example, Plato's philosophical activity is triggered by his personal connection to his mentor, Socrates, who acts as the sage for his movement to a life of philosophical examination. Plato does not need to be in love with Socrates to experience this influence; in fact, perhaps this is precisely what confuses Alcibiades when he is with Socrates, as he does not know how to proceed in a way that is not erotic. In Plato's case, Socrates acts as a philosophical beloved who becomes the incentive towards philosophy. Dante, centuries later, experiences the same intellectual awakening through the particular experience of beauty, as he is moved to artistic creation via the sight of Beatrice, a beauty that for him remains almost as unreachable as a transcendent Form, as they do not even engage in conversation. Beatrice Portinari, a woman whom Dante only saw twice in his life, once when he was eight and the second time nine years later, had such an impact in his life that even though Dante never got to establish a relationship with her, he would use her as the source of inspiration for his work and his spiritual development. In fact, in *La Vita Nuova*, Dante states that when he saw her his heart instantly told him "*Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi*: Behold a god more powerful than I, who, coming, will rule over me" (8). This experience of particular love is what grounds both Plato and Dante as individuals and as thinkers, as this recognition of beauty in the phenomenal world is the origin of their understanding of beauty in a transcendent sense – for Plato, prompting him towards philosophy, and for Dante, towards God.

Coincidentally, both muses, different as they are in the nature of their beauty and their relationship to each author, are suddenly removed from sight as they both die, in similarly tragic

ways.[22] These deaths, however, do not produce intellectual or artistic stagnation, as could be expected; on the contrary, they fuel creation. Unlike Alcibiades, who needed the permanent physical reminder of Socrates in order to stay on the track to a virtuous life, both Plato and Dante are driven into intellectual and artistic production. Plato spends his entire life as a student of Socrates, and after his mentor's death, devotes his entire life to the writing of philosophical texts, most of which have his former mentor as the main character and philosophical voice. In this manner, Plato focuses on the generation of philosophical texts that have his mentor as the focal point and develops his philosophical ideas in a manner that combines the desire for truth in philosophy with the aesthetic sensibility of the poetic medium.

Equivalently, Beatrice's death, which occurs when she is just 24, sends Dante into a contemplative state that fuels his creative energy, as he is now focused on honouring her memory through artistic creation. Even though Beatrice's death at first halts the production of *La Vita Nuova*, ultimately her existence is what drives Dante two produce his major works, *La Vita Nuova, Convivio,* and *La Divina Commedia*, which use his beloved as the major inspiration. Before Beatrice's death Dante states that he "decided to write verse in which [he] would reveal her miraculous and excellent effect, so that not only those who could physically see her, but others might know of her what words can show" (*La Vita Nuova* 89). In other words, the vision of Beatrice's particular beauty drives Dante not only into intellectual production via writing, but into artistic creation of more beauty, as he writes s*onettos* and *canzones* that try to emulate and recreate the experience of watching Beatrice. Furthermore, Beatrice's beauty moves Dante into self-analysis and inquiry into transcendence. When he sees Beatrice for the second time he states: "she greeted me so virtuously, so much so that I saw then to the very end of grace" (*La*

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22. Plato witnesses his mentor condemned as a corrupting influence to the youth of Athens, whereas Beatrice dies young and suddenly, and married to another man.

Vita Nuova 10), implying that the sight of Beatrice itself moves him into a vision of the divine, the ultimate 'end' of grace. The vision of Beatrice is what drives Dante towards a complete state of goodness and kindness towards people; he is driven to a state of *caritas* via his experience of love: "for me no enemy remained, in fact I shone with a flame of charity that made me grant pardon to whoever had offended me" (*La Vita Nuova* 27). In addition, after Beatrice's death Dante decides to stop writing and to "study as much as [he] can" so that he can truly do her justice through his writing: "I hope to write of her what has never been written of any woman" (*La Vita Nuova* 129). In his case, his experience of particular beauty prompts him to become not only better at his craft, but incites him towards the spiritual betterment of his life.

In fact, Joseph Anthony Mazzeo believes that Dante's inspiration in love and the way he is led to God through the beauty of Beatrice, as described in the *Commedia* and his other works, are highly evocative of Plato, especially the idea of beauty acting as the medium by which we attain knowledge of the divine as described in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. Mazzeo explains that Dante's love for Beatrice acts as the infrastructure of his move towards God, as he delineates in the *Commedia*. Love and beauty, for Dante, "are not merely architectural elements, but the basic concepts in terms of which the poem is articulated and through which it conveys meaning. They make the journey possible and determine its nature" (Mazzeo 133). For Dante, the beauty of Beatrice allows him to embark on the journey to *paradiso* in the first place, both metaphorically, as a character of the *Commedia*, and literally as a human being led to a realization of God, in a similar manner to the lover who is able to bridge the gap between the sensible and the Forms in Diotima's ladder. In the *Convivio*, Dante explains that through his experience of love with Beatrice, he is led to the love of another lady: lady Philosophy. After Beatrice's death Dante is driven to study in order to become better at writing, and he starts

reading Boethius and Cicero, who help him find solace in philosophy. Philosophy becomes his second love after Beatrice and what allows him to return to his craft: "feeling myself elevated from thoughts of the former love to recognition of the virtues of this one, I opened my mouth to utter the words of the canzone before us" (*Convivio* 60). The fact that Beatrice acts as Dante's inspiration for this realization, both in life and in his work, attests to the revelatory nature of particular beauty to point towards transcendence: "beauty, [Dante] says, is an external light that makes manifest an internal splendor" (Mazzeo 142).

In addition, this experience of beauty in the particular produces the divine madness that engulfs the lover as result of the sight of beauty, a divine madness which is associated with creation in the beautiful. The pedagogical goal of beauty as described in the *Symposium* and further elucidated by the arguments present in the *Phaedrus* is to obtain the ability to create, to beget in the beautiful, through an inspiration like that of the poets, whose skill is described by the idea of *techne* within the over-arching structure of understanding; that is, to create beauty not for beauty's sake, but to convey a meaning that is also true. At the end of the ladder, after the vision of the Beautiful is obtained, and as I explained in Chapter 2, the philoso-lover is prompted into action: after obtaining the revelation of the form of the Beautiful, the lover is now able to create beauty that can lead others to this same sight. An example of this type of creation is present in Dante's *Convivio,* wherein Dante explains that Boethius and Cicero led him towards his love of Philosophy via "the sweetness of their discourse" (69).

This concept of giving birth in beauty is somewhat decoded when examined next to the notion of divine madness present in the *Phaedrus*. The final jump into action has a twofold requirement; first, it necessitates inspiration, typically associated with poetic production, so as to create *kalos* offspring, both intellectual and physical although in this case I am focusing on the

intellectual products. Secondly, the jump into action requires *noesis* of truth and what transcends the phenomenal so as to create offspring that are both beautiful and true, to use the language of philosophical midwifery. In this manner, the individual is able to create in truth in accordance with the Beautiful and not with an image of what beauty is supposed to be; this is similar to the contrast between Agathon's adorned yet vacuous eulogy and Socrates' initially unappealing, yet content-filled, encomium. The divine madness produced in the *Phaedrus* at the sight of beauty sheds new light onto this process of inspiration, whereby madness occurs as a result of the soul recognizing the divine transcendence within the particular manifestation it observes. Thereby, this creation is meant to produce beauty that captures the ability of the particular experience of beauty to point towards the transcendent; the lover should now be able to produce inspired works that encompass understanding and that are *kalos* enough to trigger the erotic frenzy for beauty in which our journey to understanding the metaphysical begins.

Both Plato and Dante are led to the point where they can participate in this type of creation, where they can be as divinely inspired as the poets while still delivering truth presented in a *kalos* package: "the larger claim [in Diotima's speech] is that the sign or criterion of wisdom is creativity" (Hyland 42). This move from the exposure to particular beauty to the necessity of creation inspired by that experience - the necessity to express in language this phenomenal interaction - is what first allows Plato and Dante, and countless others, not only to immortalize their source of inspiration, but to achieve immortality themselves, producing an art form that accomplishes both to inspire and to deliver content: a form that is not beauty devoid of content, but content made *kalos*. Consequently, both Plato and Dante go on to create but retain the essence of their beloveds in the process, using them not only as inspiration but as an integral part of their works, yet not confusing them to be the end. In this manner both Socrates and Beatrice

are elevated from their mortal status and immortalized as somewhat super-human creatures. Socrates is often times depicted as having transcendent wisdom and *sophrosune*, leading a life many would deem to be virtuous and capable of commanding the utmost fascination and fear from his peers. Similarly, Beatrice is elevated to the status of a saint, a being whose memory alone is capable of guiding Dante from the inferno and eventually of leading him towards God.

Whether Plato's Socrates resembles the historical individual, or whether his depiction is purely a creation of Plato's mind is not relevant for this examination – what is relevant is that Plato immortalizes his mentor throughout his dialogues, creating works in such a way as to be able to preserve Socrates' persona infinitely. The same is true of Beatrice, who, regardless of her actual identity, was able to move the Florentine author into poetic greatness. What is important is that for both authors their experience of particular beauty, both in body and in soul, and the love derived from this experience, are what prompts them to create beautiful *logos*. Beatrice becomes the inspirational light in Dante's philosophy and subsequent movement to God, in addition to becoming the muse for all of his poetic creations. Socrates, on the other hand, serves as Plato's source of intellectual awakening from the moment that he becomes his mentor, and the fact that Plato uses Socrates as a character over and over again in his work testifies to the inspirational role of Socrates as a teacher, even if he loses this position in the later dialogues. Like the lover, who goes from loving the beauty of the person to then being led to a vision of Beauty that drives her to create in beauty, both for herself and for her object of love, Plato and Dante created canonical works of philosophy and literature that not only immortalized themselves, but also their source of inspiration in the process. It is the beauty of their beloveds, both romantic and philosophical *eromenoi* that inspired in them *kalos* creations while moving them towards higher

understanding, the understanding that their beauty is evocative of an absolute beauty that transcends them.

In this manner, the experience of loving Beatrice moves Dante to an understanding that his love for her is the medium by which he becomes close to the absolute love of God and his own philosophical journey. Plato experiences the same movement, but unlike Dante he moves from Socrates to his own philosophical doctrines, to a life devoted to philosophical inquiry, but most importantly, to philosophical creation. These authors thus incorporate in their works the experience of particular beauty without making Alcibiades' mistake of elevating this temporal beauty into universality. The creations of these authors, combining the experience of beauty with content are meant to replicate the experience of falling in love, to allow the reader to go through the progression of the philosopher-lover in Diotima's story, even when they lack their personal Socrates or Beatrice. Through their beautiful intellectual offspring readers are thus able to 'fall in love' with the words in themselves and begin their own movement up the ladder.

4.4 Proper philosophical writing according to Plato: beauty and truth combined

Perhaps the ability of particular beauty to trigger thoughts beyond itself is why philosophy is called to embellish itself, so that through beauty individuals can access truth. Through the experience of particular beauty, the search for *aletheia* is made accessible: the metaphysical goal is humanized, and the bridge between the physical and what lies beyond is temporarily able to be bridged. In this manner, the violent upheaval required by Aristophanes' humans that we saw in the *Symposium* and that delineates the tragic ontological status of humanity, is no longer a necessity, since thanks to the love of beauty, replicated in these works, the lover is able to become a philosopher of sorts. As Strauss states, it is the "right kind of

philosophy [that is] truly poetic" (7), as it welcomes the individual completely, embracing both reason and *eros* as equal components of his being and equal participants of his intellectual quests. This combination of *muthos* and *logos*, the merging of literary form with philosophical content, is already at the foundation of all of Plato's works, which are dialogues that are equal parts literary and philosophical texts, operating on both levels to engage *eros* in all of its forms. For the more traditionally philosophical souls, the philosophical content of the text stands out amidst the poetry of the words, whereas for the lovers of more sensible beauty, who are guided less by rationality, the beauty of the text and the literary prowess of the dialogues engage them in equal manner, and through symbolism guide them to the philosophical structure underneath.

It is not that truth is not beautiful in and of itself, but rather that it does not shine as brightly as sensible beauty does for us. Our *eros* for the Beautiful is ignited in our experiences with beauty, whether the beautiful is manifested in people, art, or even nature. This fundamental first ignition is at its strongest when beauty is the source of desire, as most individuals are lovers of beauty in one way or another. Through beauty, we can move and become engaged in philosophical conversation, like Aristodemus and the rest of the guests at the banquet who come in for a celebratory feast in the name of poetry, or for their own fixation on a beautiful soul, and are eventually led into philosophical debate. Even Apollodorus, without attending the banquet, is able to receive this information due to his love for Socrates. Plato's works are a testament to the value that he assigns to both form and content, not leaving behind one for the sake of the other, but rather incorporating both for maximum effectiveness. In this manner, Plato carefully tailors both form and content to inform each other dialogically, to exert the same effect that Socrates' inner Silenic statues have on the unsuspecting Alcibiades.

For the pedagogical role of beauty to work within philosophy, writing should take care of both form and content in such a way as to attract the attention of the reader and to deliver knowledge. Socrates never writes, but Plato has him deliver a criticism of writing in the *Phaedrus* that is useful to understanding what proper writing looks like to Plato. In the first part of the *Phaedrus* Socrates talks about the importance of beauty within philosophical education, as well as the proper education of the soul. As we have explored in both Chapters 2 and 3, beauty is presented as the gateway Form to the realm of Platonic metaphysics, an idea that is also developed in the *Symposium* through a look at the relationship between individuals. The second part of the *Phaedrus* somewhat changes the tone of the dialogue, as it suddenly delves into a criticism of writing, not only unexpected within a written work, but that seems out of place after the discussion of beauty. However, the purpose of this criticism of writing is to further contextualize the discussion on beauty and its association with philosophical writing, such as we have examined at the beginning of this section.

First, Plato has Socrates explain what constitutes a good speech in order then to have him criticize writing for failing to acquire the good elements of oral communication. In order for speeches to be suitable for learning, and not merely sophistic devices like Lysias' speech that has Phaedrus in a frenzy, Socrates states that the speech-maker must know what he writes about in addition to knowing his audience. Socrates states that "as the Spartan said, there is no genuine art of speaking without a grasp of truth" (*Phaedrus* 260e); in order to create a good speech or a good piece of writing, one must know the topic to be examined in addition to understanding the soul of one's interlocutor or reader, so that the speech ends up persuading the audience and appealing to his or her nature. This aspect of good oratory, knowing your audience, is a concept that sophists such as Lysias have mastered already; the emphasis on appealing form over content is an

example of their understanding that audiences are more likely to be moved by embellished form than true content. Thus, as opposed to Lysias' speech that has persuaded Phaedrus due to a form that is shiny in appearance yet contradictory in content, Socrates argues that the main point of persuasion in a speech should come from the truth of the words themselves. This point is especially significant after Phaedrus' suggestion that persuasion proceeds from what will move the audience rather than from what is true: "what I have actually heard about this, Socrates, my friend, is that it is not necessary for the intending orator to learn what is really just, but only what will seem just to the crowd who will act as judges" (*Phaedrus* 260a).

The problem with Phaedrus' understanding is that orators and writers end up producing works that look like they are true, when in fact they are not.[23] The nature of speech should be "to direct the soul" (*Phaedrus* 271d) and consequently, both oratory and writing should encapsulate in equal measurements truth and the human component, that is, what our *eros* will find appealing. The emphasis on the speech-maker knowing the soul and being able to lead it to truth reminds us of the idea of the philosopher as the midwife of the soul, present in the *Theatetus* and presented in action in the *Symposium.* Socrates quotes Acumenus as claiming that to be a physician one must know how to find the proper balance in the body of patients (*Phaedrus* 268b). This example is part of Socrates' greater admonition that a good speech maker will know how to balance the parts with the whole so as to create harmony, much like the way a physician finds the proper harmony in the body through knowledge and practice. He states that the similarity is that in both cases "we need to determine the nature of something – of the body in medicine, of the soul in rhetoric" (*Phaedrus* 270b). Thus, the speech-maker must know how to

23. This is the reason why, as we have seen, Socrates tells Agathon, somewhat ironically: "In my foolishness, I thought you should tell the truth about whatever you praise, that this should be your basis, and that from this a speaker should select the most beautiful truths and arrange them most suitably" (*Symposium* 198d).

find proper balance in the individual who will listen to his speech in order to persuade, and this is something that writing must emulate. In addition, like the speech-writer, the writer must know his subject, which emphasizes the idea that proper philosophical writing must deliver both truth and beauty, as knowledge of one's audience would require the writer to recognize what human *eros* is attracted to, and how it works.

Furthermore, Socrates' critique of writing dwells on the fact that, as a piece of non-performance art, it remains "silent" (*Phaedrus* 275d). Since a piece of writing cannot interact with its audience, it does not know the proper way of speaking to each soul, as it is incapable of controlling or recognizing the person who will read it. In this manner, if there is any level of symbolism in the text it may escape the reader, who might just take the text literally and miss the meaning of what she is reading; for example, this would be the case if Phaedrus took Socrates' chariot myth for the truth and not symbolism, or if a reader read the dialogue and took the myth to be true. The biggest problem with writing is that it remains static, but also, and very importantly, that it does not speak directly to the soul of each reader. Socrates is able to tailor his speeches to suit the nature and interests of his interlocutors, whereas a piece of writing cannot do so. According to Socrates' guidelines, writing must resemble an actual conversation and speak to a plethora of readers regardless of time. The reader's role must resemble that of an interlocutor or a participant in the Socratic elenchus in order for the reader to go through the dialogical movement that the interlocutors go through in each dialogue.

Plato was clearly aware of these limitations, and using Socrates as a mouthpiece he delivers the guidelines of what proper writing, proper philosophy, should do in order to persuade: to engage the soul, recognizing the dichotomy between our rational and erotic capacities, in order to address the *eros* of each reader, and thus deliver knowledge in the most effective manner.

Plato's own philosophical enterprise uses a medium known for its beauty, a more poetic literary style of writing, with his philosophical ideas. Scholars such as Strauss and Leon Harold Craig believe Plato crafted this form to "fully exploit the [strengths of writing] while greatly attenuating [its weaknesses]" (Craig xxvi), thus creating a form that possesses flexibility, and ideally is able to move readers through dialectic. Consequently, the Platonic dialogue becomes a medium of writing where form and content are intrinsically connected and inform each other dialogically, with the goal of engaging the reader through beauty into philosophy. Craig thereby describes the dialogues as "a wonderful synthesis of reverent memorial, dramatic poetry, philosophic argument, Aesopian fable, and God only knows what else" (xxvi) that embody a concise and carefully tailored writing style. However, this style is not unique to Plato and can be seen in Dante's own writing and the writings of authors who combine content with a beautiful form.

The love of beautiful *logos* present in the dialogue can thus replace the love of the beautiful person which is not present in writing, in order to provide a foundational step on the ladder. Plato, like Dante, thus writes in a *kalos* manner that also portrays truth. As a student who is moved beyond admiration, Plato understands that his mentor is a vessel for higher knowledge and not the end of his intellectual journey, like Dante understands Beatrice's role as a medium to philosophy and theology. Plato, through his work, is able to use Socrates symbolically to elicit in others the same movement forward, or at least the stepping stones towards understanding. The experience of beauty is thus what "at least for certain types of human beings, generates philosophy" (Hyland 87), and this movement, most effectively caused by the love of a particular human being, is what is intended to be replicated in proper writing. Only through the beautification of philosophy can this development be possible. As Tejera explains, "knowledge

of the truth does not guarantee its persuasiveness" (47), and this is where beauty comes in, revealing an aesthetic persuasion like no other.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Socrates' account of *ta erotika* in the *Symposium,* as relayed by his teacher Diotima, describes philosophical education as grounded on the sensible experience as the means to any cognition of the transcendent. The journey of the lover from the empirical to the transcendental and back to the empirical provides an epistemological account that does not denigrate the knowledge that the sensible provides, but rather uses it as a gateway to greater understanding. The lover, like the philosopher in the *Republic*, undergoes a movement that is philosophical at its core: from the particularized experience of beauty the lover is able to expand his knowledge and move up the ladder epistemologically and ontologically towards greater objects of knowledge and thus, towards a more comprehensive understanding. In doing so, the lover incorporates the sensible experience as a foundational aspect of how one acquires knowledge, so that at the end of the journey he is able to return to the sensible to create with his newfound knowledge. This idea of the lover giving 'birth' in beauty is the step that brings the lover back to the cave, to the sensible realm, so that the end of the journey is in fact very much in the physical. In addition, this return highly resembles the image of the philosopher in the *Republic,* who 'begets' wisdom once he has come into *noesis* of the Forms. The language used to explain the relationship between the philosopher and knowledge in the *Republic,* as in the *Symposium,* is erotic; Socrates depicts the philosopher as an individual who has an erotic relationship with wisdom:

> "as [the real lover of learning] moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship with it, and that, once getting near what really is and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives,

> is nourished, and- at that point, but not before- is relieved from the pains of giving birth" (*Republic* 490a-c).

As Socrates states, the real lover of learning has an erotic relationship with wisdom, very similar to the relationship that the lover has with the Beautiful in Diotima's encomium in the *Symposium.* Both lover and philosopher are moved towards an understanding of the Forms, in this case beauty and wisdom respectively, so that they become pregnant with knowledge and are able to 'beget' knowledge in one case and give 'birth' in beauty in the other. In both cases, their relationships to the Forms are of an erotic nature so that at the end of the journey both individuals are able to produce knowledge and beauty based on their relationship with the Forms; that is, both are able to recreate wisdom and beauty properly in the sensible so that other individuals can embark on the same journey.

Diotima's exposition provides not merely an account of *eros,* but rather an account of the way that human beings can access the same philosophical goals as do the 'lovers' of learning in the *Republic* via particular manifestations of beauty. In this manner, her description provides not just a theoretical discipline of how one *might* acquire knowledge, or how a few 'real' lovers of wisdom might go about pursuing it, but rather a philosophical approach to living and learning grounded in the practical and in an experience that is accessible to all: the experience of *eros* for what is beautiful and immediate. Whereas the purely rational approach to philosophy can cut out a great part of our dichotomous nature and can thus be seen as not practical, this account, centered on aesthetic persuasion, provides a means by which all individuals can become a philosopher of sorts. The aesthetic experience of the lover in his particular relationship to the object of love provides an accessible praxis that targets our corporeal nature in addition to our rationality, as we are primarily embodied souls.

Eros, and its ability to move the soul to action at the sight of beauty allows individuals to philosophize via the most accessible human activity: love for the beauty of another individual. Through the understanding of how *eros* operates we are able to bridge the gap between the purely physical and the transcendent in an attempt to heal our ignorance and to do so without leaving behind the sensible motivations that allow us to embark on this journey in the first place. *Eros*, common to all human beings, is what allows us to move from ignorance and into philosophical inquiry, and it is able to do so via love, through the experience of beauty in the particular, which at first sight seems to be a highly unphilosophical activity, as it does not directly engage rationality. *Eros* thus gives motion to the entire soul because it longs after beauty more than it longs after anything else, and is able to create an alliance between reason and desire whereby desire moves the soul towards action, and reason regulates desire so as to not stray into excess and lose sight of the ultimate end. Both aspects working together suit our dual nature and create the harmony necessary to move the entire soul towards philosophical education.

In this fashion, beauty can be regarded as a powerful pedagogical tool for philosophical inquiry. The main advantage that beauty has is that *eros* for beauty precedes understanding, so that the spectator does not require a rationalization of the experience of beauty to long for it; observation alone is more than enough. Beauty's non-discursive nature works as an epistemological advantage: Diotima's philoso-lovers are not even aware of their journey because they required no rational persuasion to embark on it in the first place. And, once they reach the end of the ladder and experience the revelation of transcendence, there is nothing else to figure out since what is Good and Beautiful instantly becomes part of their understanding.

Beauty's power to ignite our *eros* is unparalleled. The very real rewards of beauty stand in stark juxtaposition to the abstract rewards of the metaphysical, concepts so alien to us that

most times they fail to provide sufficient encouragement. As creatures of the senses this physical acknowledgment is imperative, especially when the key to transcendence is contained within it. This statement plays out in two important ways. First, beauty is the form that most adequately suits our dichotomous nature as creatures affected by both our rational and erotic capacities. Second, the appreciation of beauty has the power to evoke transcendence in the mind of the observer. Our phenomenal existence is traditionally seen as a burden for our highly valued rationality; the hierarchical relationship between the physical and metaphysical plays out in all aspects of our lives, as the material is often seen as vulgar and superficial in comparison to what is incorporeal. This hierarchy is also present in Plato, who theorizes that the metaphysical is able to provide the stable objects of knowledge that we are unable to obtain in our fluctuating world, where objects that are in constant flux provide the spectator with belief or opinion, yet no *noesis*. Consequently, the immediate sensible world has long been seen as preventing the mind from seeing what it is *supposed* to see, if the mind did not have the body as an obstacle for this vision. This perspective assumes that within us lies the capacity for greater knowledge, for absolute vision, yet simultaneously places within ourselves the burden for not being able to attain this visualization. The corporeal is important as it is what we actually have, and this is a fact that Plato emphasizes when he depicts earthly beauty as a medium to understanding the Forms, as much as for him real knowledge in fact lies away from the physical. No philosophical doctrine will be good enough if our erotic capacity is not integrated and given a place alongside reason, and in both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* Plato emphasizes the ways in which our *eros* works for the attainment of the transcendent goal. Thus, the incorporation of both body and mind as the key elements by which the person *knows* is imperative; one cannot know solely through reason, as we are embodied souls for as long as we are alive.

The burden of the physical is an important aspect of our ontological status, with *eros* constantly interfering with our rational capacity. We have witnessed this collusion in the frenzied reaction to beauty of the black horse in the *Phaedrus*; we have seen it in Alcibiades' frantic desire to share in Socrates' inner beauty so as to acquire his wisdom. Beauty has the power to command these reactions, as it is part of our nature to lack beauty and thus to desire it. It is the tragic flaw of human nature as expounded by Aristophanes: our constant state of incompleteness and the awareness of this loss is elevates *eros* as our most commanding capacity, as our soul longs to fill the void. Precisely at this point the second aspect of the earlier statement about beauty suiting our dichotomous nature comes in. Beauty has the power to evoke transcendence, and as Scarry phrases it: "beautiful things […] always carry greetings from other worlds within them" (33). This is the meeting point where both *eros* and beauty unite most explicitly. Within particular experiences of beauty the Beautiful is contained; the metaphysical is enclosed within the physical in an instantaneous manner that jumps out to the eye but not to the mind. This capacity makes the perceiver acknowledge that there is transcendence within the particular without understanding what this transcendence is. This relation is seen in Dante's reaction to Beatrice, whereby he is able to view divine grace even for a moment merely because of the sight of his beloved. The perceiver is then led to *think* of what lies beyond, to investigate these abstract worlds contained within the particular and concrete manifestation.

Similarly, *eros* is our intermediary capacity, the element in us that allows us ever so slightly to bridge the gap between the empirical and what lies beyond, allowing us to move forward and up in a way that maintains harmony, unlike the violent upheaval described in Aristophanes' speech. We are incarnate creatures first and foremost; we know via what is sensible, especially what we see. Beauty gives us this glimpse of transcendence that *eros* longs

for more than any other worldly incentive. Love thus works to move us forward. The experience of beauty is the most powerful medium by which to transcend, especially when it leads to creation in beauty, providing the only way in which human beings can access any sort of transcendence: immortality through fame or the extension of the self via procreation. Through the action of creation in beauty we deny the ephemeral nature of the moment of love, or of the moment of cognition of the beautiful object or person, a sight so striking to our senses that we wish to maintain it forever, even with the knowledge that unlike the thing that it moves us towards, this moment is immersed in temporality. Like Dante upon seeing Beatrice, so mesmerized by that experience of beauty that he wishes to immortalize it forever in writing, not just for his own pleasure but so that others can experience his vision. Through creation in beauty we are thus able to escape the curse of temporality, the inadequacy of our finite natures to possess the beloved and prevent the feeling of happiness from decaying, by extending our lives in creations that beauty will keep alive regardless of time.

Beauty's non-discursive beginning and the slow and pleasant process by which our *eros* works at the sight of beauty aids reason. It allows the polarizing aspects of our nature to find harmony, as beauty moves *eros* into action, pushing it towards movement and inquiry, while simultaneously allowing rationality to be exercised, as reason must reign in desire, figure out how to proceed, all the while being awakened. Beauty thus has a unique way to combine both of our capacities and use *both* for understanding, not merely one over the other.

In this manner, beauty can lead us to examine questions of ethics and truth. Our aesthetic sensibility makes us more aware of these questions. We are made aware of the way form and content inform each other, giving us a more complete cognition of the world and ourselves, as it decenters us and places us in relationship to the world, making us think critically, prompting us

to examine our lives, as does Alcibiades. All of a sudden we see the world in a greater capacity; beauty allows our senses to expand. It makes us think of temporality. This critical thinking is what allows for creation in beauty, and beauty in action produces the creation of more beauty. The individuals inspired by the particular experience of *eros* and the Beautiful, like Diotima's philoso-lovers, are many; these are individuals that give birth in beauty physically and authors whose offspring are of an intellectual nature. In these accounts the particular is not only not left behind, but it is incorporated and assigned a place in relation to the whole. It is the particular experience of love that paves the way for creation; Dante would have no *Commedia* without Beatrice, and his metaphorical and actual journey to God would have played out much differently. The particular experience, although foundational, is not left behind, as it is necessary to incorporate it in order to understand transcendence itself. In addition, the return to particularity is present in both Diotima's ladder, with the lover returning to give birth in beauty, and the Cave analogy, with the philosopher king returning to the cave. We are still corporeal beings, and this return to particularity is necessary for creation. As long as we are human, the end of the journey is here in this world.

Philosophy is thus called to beautify itself, to multiply its accessibility as our *eros* is naturally suited to desire what is beautiful, and beauty can act as this key towards higher knowledge. Beauty as a whole is a powerful incentive, not only through fine art, literature, or the beauty of others, but truth in itself can be made accessible, without stripping it of its veracity, as shown in Plato's philosophical-literary texts, or Dante's poetry, and countless other works of philosophy and beauty combined. That is what *eros* amounts to, to that experience that some call love and other calls philosophy, and for both it requires a stepping out of what is immediate and a movement towards what lies beyond. The philosopher is the ideal lover, loving what is

unchanging. But we are all lovers of particular beauty, and through this experience, we have the same access to knowledge.

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