THE UNITY OF PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM

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THE UNITY OF PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM

by

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ABSTRACT

The unity of Plato's *Symposium* is its continuity. There are a number of themes and threads of continuity throughout the dialogue which dialectically progress from beginning to end. These threads of continuity are drawn out and examined in relation to one another to form a complete and coherent doctrine of love. Chapter 1 examines the first five speeches, each of which rhetorically presents the nature and function of love. Chapter 2 demonstrates how these rhetorical notions are drawn together and grounded dialectically by the speech of Socrates. In Chapter 3 the speech of Alcibiades is examined with particular reference to how Alcibiades' account of the conduct of Socrates reflects and demonstrates the proper conduct of the lover as it has been dialectically grounded in Socrates' speech. The nature and function of love unfolds throughout the dialogue in a movement from the implicit to the explicit, and from rhetoric to dialectic. The speeches, taken as a whole, express the dynamic of love as evolving mediation between humanity and divinity.

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I dedicate this work to my supervisor and mentor Dr. D. Vance Maxwell,

to whom I give my utmost thanks

and for whom I have the greatest admiration.

I have him to thank for engendering and cultivating in me this love of wisdom and for showing me the path that leads one out of the cave,

all the while warning me that indeed,

"omnia praeclara tam difficilia, quam rara sunt."

To the men and women of the faculty and staff of the Department of Philosophy, whose dedication to the pursuit of truth has been a constant inspiration, I give my humble appreciation,

my highest esteem,

and deserved praise.

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whose unconditional love and steadfast support of my *φιλοσοφια* have made everything that I am possible,

I can only give my love.

"I would repay the bounty they have given to me, but it is as the sky: it can never be approached."

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INTRODUCTION

The unity of Plato's *Symposium* is its continuity. The nature and function of love unfolds throughout the dialogue in a movement from the implicit to the explicit, and from rhetoric to dialectic. Each of the first five speeches reveals, in its own way, the nature and function of love in rhetorical form. What is rhetorically and explicitly revealed, as well as that which is dialectically implied, by the first five speeches is grounded dialectically by the speech of Socrates. The speeches, taken as a whole, express the dynamic of love as evolving mediation between humanity and divinity. The continuity among the speeches is often implicit, since notions are expanded upon, corrected, pushed aside, and taken up again; yet, this unity of their continuity is always present. Nothing is lost in the dialectic as each speech makes its contribution toward revealing the nature of love.

The scholars who disagree with this view that the speeches form a unity in continuity can be grouped into two camps. First, there are those who explicitly deny the continuity among the speeches outright, thus treating them as separate entities having only an external relation to one another. Secondly, there are those who do not explicitly deny an internal continuity, yet claim that the thesis that the speeches form a unity is both difficult to maintain and fruitless in its application. Edith Hamilton

is among the former group, proposing that the speeches are merely externally related. She writes,

> There is little need for any introduction to [the *Symposium*] and no need for any explanation. It presents no difficulties. It is not an argument to be followed, but a series of speeches made at a supper party, a symposium. These speeches are not connected with each other except that they all have the same subject, love ...[1]

Anyone who reads the *Symposium* as a serious work of philosophy cannot but disagree with the claim that the dialogue "presents no difficulties". I shall, through the course of this work, argue against the claim that the speeches are not internally connected. They indeed have more in common than their subject.

Robert Waterfield is among those scholars who propose the latter view, claiming that the thesis that the speeches are internally related is a difficult view to maintain and is nevertheless fruitless. He says,

> It is common, in considering the purpose of the first five speeches, to compare them to the speech of Socrates-Diotima. In what respects does Socrates disagree with them? In what respects does he develop the points they made? Can they even be seen as forming a gradual progression, working toward the theory developed in Socrates speech? ... The main difficulty with these kinds of questions is that there are as many points of convergence between Socrates' speech and the others as there are points of divergence ... It seems best, then, to take each of the first five speeches at face value and to think of what it has to offer in itself, rather than to compare it to what Socrates says.[2]

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[1] Plato, "Symposium." Plato: the Collected Dialogues Including the Letters. Trans. R. Hackforth. Eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1989), p. 526.
[2] Plato, Symposium, Robin Waterfield (trans.), (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), p. xxii -xxiii.

Waterfield goes on to cite some of the points of apparent contradiction among certain speeches. However, in exploring the dialectical continuity among the speeches of the *Symposium*, we are not merely playing a 'matching game', looking for points of convergence or divergence between Socrates and the others. More importantly, the reader observes the progression and evolution of the notions raised by each speaker. The similarities among the speeches are not trivial or coincidental. The dialectic is moving and progressing, and thus we can attribute not only the points of 'convergence' to this progression, but also the points of 'divergence'; for progression not only involves a building upon foundations, but it can also involve an alteration of those foundations.

Waterfield argues that because the speeches do not seem to progress successively with absolute consistency, i.e., a certain speech might retreat from an advancement that has gone before it, then looking for continuity is pointless. He says for example, "It is particularity hard to sustain the thesis that the first five speeches form some kind of progression: Aristophanes is certainly more profound than Agathon, and yet precedes him ..."[3] Although Waterfield is correct that the unity of the dialogue is difficult to arrive at, he is incorrect in claiming that the thesis is neither correct nor fruitful. Taking the speeches as separate,

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

unconnected entities is to preclude that there is a continuity among them. Simply comparing one to another in degrees of profundity or morality, is to relate them externally, and to trivialize their mutual importance. The argument of the dialogue is much more complex than Waterfield's view allows.

Although there are a few occasions when there are retreats from earlier advancements, the most important of these, as I see it, occur in the speech of Socrates. Although Socrates' speech is the culmination of the dialogue, Plato's use of Diotima as the mouthpiece for this culmination further complicates the matter. We shall see that Diotima herself retreats from several of the achievements of her predecessors. The intricate complexity of the dialogue, the difficulty in quantifying its progression, and its often implicit continuity, are all the more reason to take the speeches as a whole and to explore the continuity among them in order to obtain a unified doctrine of love. This view, I believe, is much more fruitful in that it takes each speaker seriously toward that end. If we believe Hamilton's and Waterfield's view that the speeches do not form a unity, why should we even bother to read the speeches before that of Socrates for any other reason but entertainment? The speech of Socrates is the culmination, yet they would have us believe that it is completely independent of the others and that there is nothing to be gained by relating it to the others. In fact, that the speeches are related is

often explicitly stated in the dialogue, such that some speakers make reference to other speakers in their own speeches. Surely Plato could not have intended that we throw aside the first third of this dialogue. Love itself is, then, a moving dynamic, and true to its ultimate form; this is how it is presented within the context of the dialogue as a whole. [4]

I shall explore the unity of the dialogue throughout three chapters. The first deals with the first five speeches: those of Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, and Agathon. The chapter is entitled, 'Love is Presented', for although these speeches are rhetorical in nature, they indeed present the reader with the nature and function of love. Chapter 2 examines the speech of Socrates and is entitled, 'Love is Grounded'. That which is presented in the first five speeches is presented by Socrates in a dialectical context, thus grounding the previous rhetorical notions of love. Chapter 3 deals with the speech of Alcibiades, which is not a speech explicitly about love, but rather, about the nature and conduct of

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[4] There are other scholars who hold this view that the dialogue forms a unity and progresses dialectically from Phaedrus to Alcibiades. Paul Epstein is one such scholar, who in his paper entitled, "The Treatment of Poetry in the Symposium of Plato" takes this approach in his examination of the possibility of the unification of tragedy and comedy. This approach, as Epstein's paper demonstrates, opens up the *Symposium* to new questions, the answers to which create a greater understanding of the dialogue as a whole. Epstein's focus is on poetry, whereas my focus is on the nature and function of love and how each speech contributes to the completion of that doctrine. Each speech, taken in isolation, is but a part of the whole dialogue, and thus in turn, a part of the whole doctrine. And while Socrates himself in his own speech returns to those that came before him, so must we return to those notions raised by the first five speakers if we are to make the greatest dialectical advancement possible from a reading of the *Symposium* in relation to Plato's ideas concerning love.

Socrates. The chapter is entitled, 'Love is Demonstrated'; for in Alcibiades' speech we observe, through the conduct of Socrates, both how love works, and how the model lover behaves in relation to his/her beloved. Because the unity of the *Symposium* is its continuity, the explicit nature of this unity will not be fully present until the end of the dialogue. We must move throughout the speeches, establishing the groundwork for the final revelation of love given to us by Plato at the end of the dialogue.

Throughout the argument of this work, I make much of the distinction and relation between rhetoric and dialectic. Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, discusses this distinction and relation at length. In that dialogue, rhetoric is negatively contrasted with dialectic as the art of persuasion, or in Socrates' words, "... a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words ..." with no regard for the truth.[5] Rhetoric largely involves deception, not reason. Dialectic, however, employs reason and argument through discussion. Through reason, dialectic can account for itself. Both dialectic and rhetoric involve persuasion, but whereas rhetoric is subjective, depending on the particular ability of the orator rather than on truth, dialectic is objective and true according to reason irrespective of its user. First and foremost, dialectic requires definition of

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[5] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 261a.

the nature of the thing in question. "... [T]o pursue an inquiry without ... [*defining* the subject] would be like a blind man's progress."[6] Thus, Socrates claims, one must show "... precisely what is the real and true nature of that object on which our discourse is brought to bear."[7] Second, the dialectician describes "... what natural capacity [the thing] has to act upon what, and through what means, or by what it can be acted upon."[8] The function of a thing can be considered only after the thing is defined. In short, dialectic defines through reason, the nature and function of a thing. The first five speakers fail to define the object of their praise, and thus are often confused about the nature and function of love. However, often they hit upon the truth without realizing the implicit dialectical achievement of their claims. They often express the truth but can give no account of it. Thus, I shall argue that Diotima's speech gives dialectical credit to much of what goes before her. The dialectic is immanent in the rhetoric of the first five speeches, yet emerges in its completion in the speech of Socrates. I shall say more about this as the work progresses.

Having said this I shall now begin with the speech of Phaedrus.

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[6] *Ibid.*, 270e.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*, 271a.

CHAPTER 1 — LOVE IS PRESENTED

1. 1 THE SPEECH OF PHAEDRUS

It is fitting that Phaedrus, the "father of the debate", begin the evening of conversation with his own speech.[9] This starting point is critically important, for it is where the implicit dialectic commences and the nature of love begins to unfold. Although we still have very far to go on our journey upon reaching the end of Phaedrus' speech since much needs to be clarified, expanded, added, and even *corrected* (for we shall see that Phaedrus and the others are incorrect in claiming that Love is a "great god"), the dialectical seed is rhetorically planted.[10] Thus, I believe that Robert Lloyd Mitchell is correct in saying,

> The first shining-forth of Eros will occur in this speech of the Shining One. Nothing of what follows will be able to do any more than reflect this light in various ways. All else that will eventually come to be seen of Eros will already be contained implicitly in this speech.[11]

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[9] Plato, *Symposium*, 177d.
[10] *Ibid.*, 178a.
[11] Robert Lloyd, Mitchell, The Hymn to Eros: A Reading of Plato's *Symposium*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993), p. 19. Mitchell points out, "His name, *Φαιδρος*, is based on the word *φαος* or *φως*, light. It means bright, gleaming, shining. Phaedrus is the Shining One". (p. 19) Martha Nussbaum says that the name 'Phaedrus' means 'sparkling'. Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), p. 200.

Initially, this might seem like too great a claim to make for Phaedrus' comparatively short, and awkwardly flowing speech, yet the nature and properties of Eros are indeed contained implicitly in his words. However, I prefer to extend this claim to all of the speeches before that of Socrates as their cumulative achievement. What is presented implicitly and rhetorically by Phaedrus is brought explicitly to light through dialectic/rhetoric in the account of Socrates and Diotima. I shall now bring out these elements in Phaedrus' speech, for they are the groundwork for our establishment of a continuity among all of the speeches of the *Symposium*. We shall build on these ideas as we go through the dialogue, thereby moving toward a definition of love that is coherent and complete.[12]

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[12] Before we begin to examine the speech of Phaedrus and those that follow it, it is necessary to explain the traditional roles of lover and beloved as they were followed in Athenian society during Plato's time. Waterfield writes, "In ancient Athens, homoeroticism was considered perfectly natural, especially in the leisured classes. I use the less familiar term 'homoeroticism' because not many Athenians were actually homosexual in the sense of being inclined to love *only* members of their own sex ... More commonly, the same people were sexually inclined towards members of both sexes ...Typically, the objects of male homoerotic desires were young boys in their teens. [The older lovers] would each pursue [the younger beloved] , and try to consummate a sexual affair ... the lover would achieve the enjoyment at least of conquest and of sexual release, while the boy might at the most reciprocate with *philia* (loyal affection or friendship), which would be due for the lover's patronage (for future political advancement, perhaps), rather than for his sexual attentions." (Waterfield, pp. xv-xvi). This relation is present in each speech of the *Symposium*. It will, however, undergo a great transformation from the common social norm, of which Waterfield informs us, to a dialectical union of minds, as we shall observe. See also, Dover, K. J.. "Eros and Nomos (Plato *Symposium* 182a-185c)," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 11 (1964) 31-42.

Much of what Phaedrus contributes to the nature of love is contained rhetorically in his four examples of it.[13] In Phaedrus' speech we do not have an explicit discourse on the nature of love, but rather, through his use of examples we see love *in action*. Much of the scholarship, however, finds fault with all four of the examples of love that Phaedrus provides, in relation to what scholars mistakenly take to be his purpose in speaking, as we shall see. We shall examine the scholarship on this matter in some depth as it relates specifically to what I believe is Phaedrus' contribution to the moving dialectic. Furthermore, Phaedrus' first example, that of the army composed entirely of lovers and their beloveds is the most dialectically rich, and thus I shall save this particular example for last. The example of the army of lovers and beloveds is set apart from the other three in its adherence to the traditional lover/beloved relationship, which three Louis Ruprecht claims contradict this traditional relation, the roles being switched concerning Achilles and Patroclus, and the others involving "... heterosexual and marital relationships ..."[14] Mitchell, whom I have quoted above,

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[13] Plato, *Symposium*, 178e-180b. These examples are: (1) The army composed entirely of lovers and beloveds, (2) Alcestis, who willingly took her husband Admetus' place in death, (3) Orpheus, who braved the depths of Hades to rescue Eurydice, and (4) Achilles, who avenged his lover Patroclus' death, knowing that if he did so, he too would surely die. Although the reader might find it useful to read Edith Hamilton or Robert Graves on the details of these last three myths, the light in which Phaedrus calls forth these examples is important in the context of the dialogue for the establishment of the selflessness of love, as we shall see.

[14] Louis A., Ruprecht, Symposia: Plato, the Erotic, and Moral Value (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 54.

summarizes his discontent with the examples of Alcestis and Orpheus: "First, a male (unnamed) who, in the face of death, has to hide behind his wife's skirts; now, a male who refuses to allow death to keep what belongs to it ..."[15] The scholarship in general seems to attack Phaedrus' choice of examples, pointing to the fact that they do not adhere to the traditional lover/beloved relationship. Although such claims, supposedly demonstrating Phaedrus' inability to provide a coherent argument, might be justified if Phaedrus' goal is to praise the homosexual lover/beloved relationship, this is not his explicit intent. Mitchell, Ruprecht, and Stanley Rosen too, as we shall see, mistakenly take the praise of this relationship as Phaedrus' thesis and then proceed to criticize these examples which fail to 'back up' this relationship. And while Ruprecht is correct to point out that Phaedrus' speech implies that "... there is something wrong with the crude categories of lover and beloved ...", he is mistaken in saying that Phaedrus' "... argument collapses finally under its own dead weight"; for his main intent is not to praise that particular relationship.[16] Mitchell is hung up on the fact that Admetus is left unnamed; yet I believe this shows that Phaedrus is not concerned with Admetus, but rather, his focus is on the actions of Alcestis.[17] The

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[15] Mitchell, p. 24.
[16] Ruprecht, p. 54.
[17] Mitchell, p. 24.

reader's focus in these examples should be on what Phaedrus himself emphasizes and in fact *does* say, not on what he *does not* say.

The closest we get to an explicit statement of Phaedrus' intent or purpose in speaking is given to us by Eryximachus' introduction to the speeches. Eryximachus relates to us that Phaedrus' complaint is that "... the god of Love, so ancient and so great, has had no song of praise composed for him by a single one of all the many poets that have ever been."[18] Thus, we might say that it is Phaedrus' intent to praise *love itself*, not its particular instantiation in the lover/beloved relationship.[19] Therefore, one should look to what Phaedrus actually brings out through his choice of examples, and how these examples contribute to the understanding of the nature of love developing within the dialogue as a whole; for it is in these examples that Phaedrus' contribution to the understanding of the nature of love can be discovered.

In one sense, the examples that Phaedrus provides, while stepping out of the bounds of the traditional lover/beloved relationship, succeed by this very fact. Although Phaedrus seems to provide these examples of love in order to strengthen his claim that "... if we could somewise contrive to have a city or an army composed of lovers and favourites ...

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[18] Plato, *Symposium*, 177b.
[19] Eryximachus proposes to his companions, "... my opinion is that we ought each of us to make a speech in turn, from left to right, praising Love as beautifully as he can ..." Plato, *Symposium*, 177d.

one might almost consider [love to be] able to make even a little band victorious over all the world", they show what love can move one to do beyond the traditional roles of lover and beloved.[20] William Cobb writes,

> The status of women in this context is an issue that appears several times in the dialogue, though what Plato intends by it is unclear. The possibility that he means to challenge the dominant male chauvinism of his day is highly debatable.[21]

Although it is not clear what Plato's intentions are, certainly Phaedrus, as he is presented here at least, is not concerned with age, sex, or sexual preference in matters of love. As we go through the speeches in the *Symposium* we will see a tension arise within the relationship between lover and beloved, a relationship which was socially accepted in Athens at the time during which Plato was writing.

What Phaedrus is rhetorically showing by these examples is the way in which love can move one to make the ultimate sacrifice. Both Achilles and Alcestis know that they will die, yet they go through with their actions despite this and for the sake of those whom they love. This is a crucial point, for the notion of self-sacrifice is all but absent in the later speeches, and surprisingly so in that of Diotima. This is Phaedrus' own contribution which is neither supplied nor defeated by Diotima's

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[20] *Ibid.*, 179a.

[21] William, Cobb, (trans) The Symposium and Phaedrus, Plato's Erotic Dialogues: Translated with Introduction and Commentaries, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 64.

arguments. The way in which this notion of self-sacrifice is presented intrinsically links self-sacrifice with death, for death seems to be the ultimate expression of it. (It is interesting that Diotima will later link love with a fear of death and a subsequent desire for immortality rather than with what is here depicted as an acceptance of it for the sake of the beloved, regardless of one's traditional role concerning age and sex.) Ruprecht claims that Phaedrus' "main point" is the linking of love and death.[22] This will be a central claim of Diotima, demonstrated dialectically in Socrates' account of their conversation. Thus, this connection, and indeed tension between love and death is an important contribution to the moving dialectic and will be taken up at many points later in the dialogue. What precisely is going on in Phaedrus' examples is that love elevates one to virtuous action, and in Phaedrus' speech, the virtue is courage. This is made explicit in the first and richest example that he provides: that of the army composed of lovers and their beloveds.

Phaedrus says, "... Love kindles the same flame of valor in the faintest heart that burns in those whose courage is innate," thus moving the lover to act courageously.[23] Already at this early stage of the dialogue, love acts as a mediator between virtue and vice; love elevates the lover to act courageously, thus making his/her action equal to that of

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[22] Ruprecht, p. 54.
[23] Plato, *Symposium*, 179b.

the innately courageous person. This is not the same, however, as acting courageously out of a *knowledge* of courage; for the lover does not have knowledge of what is and is not to be feared; but rather, he has true opinion of courage.[24] Exactly what Love's relation to true opinion is, is not made explicit until the speech of Socrates. What we have at this initial stage, however, is a rhetorical description of what love does. Love incites one to virtuous action, and thus, the physical act of the lover and the courageous person is the same: he/she (*he* in this particular example) 'courageously' protects his/her beloved, risking his/her own life for the other's sake.

Rosen says, interpreting these words of Phaedrus, that love acts as a kind of substitute for virtue.[25] In a sense he is correct, for the lover neither achieves nor embodies the virtue of courage, yet he should not be viewed negatively as Rosen views him, for the matter is much more complicated. Rosen interprets Phaedrus as meaning that the lover-soldiers are shamed into acting properly, much as Alcibiades will admit that Socrates shames him. To an extent, Rosen is again correct, for Phaedrus does say, "... the lover would rather anyone than his beloved should see him leave the ranks or throw away his arms in flight - nay, he

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[24] For a sustained look at Plato's treatment of courage, see the *Laches* and *Protagoras*.
[25] Stanley Rosen, Plato's Symposium (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1968): "In his substitution of Eros for virtue, Phaedrus tacitly appeals to the premise that Eros will gain more of virtue's benefits for more people than virtue would itself." (p. 54).

would sooner die a thousand deaths."[26] Rosen, however, moves from here to claim mistakenly that, for Phaedrus, the lover acts out of his own selfish desires. He writes, "Eros, then, is for Phaedrus a substitute for virtue, and especially for courage. It enables inferior men to perform 'great and splendid deeds.'"[27] This, I believe, is an improper reading of what Phaedrus actually says:

> ... the very presence of Love kindles *the same flame* of valour in the faintest heart that burns in those whose courage is innate.[28]

Love is not a substitute for virtue, but rather, it brings about or acts as a catalyst for virtuous action. Certainly the cause of the courageous act differs between the innately courageous man and the lover (the former acting from knowledge of courage while the latter acts according to true opinion), yet one need not assume then that the motivation of the lover is selfish desire. In fact, Phaedrus' illustrations subsequent to this example, i.e., the three we have mentioned above, clearly indicate the opposite: the lover and beloved in these examples sacrifice themselves. (Again, note the tension between these categories, for the majority of Phaedrus' examples do not fit the traditional lover/beloved relationship).

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[26] Plato, *Symposium*, 179b.
[27] Rosen, p. 53.
[28] Plato, *Symposium*, 179a-b. Although this translation is a little "flowery", it does well to encompass the meaning of the Greek which reads, "*ωστε ομοιον ειναι τω αριστω φυσει*", i.e., "so that he is the same as/like/equal to the most courageous person with respect to his nature."

Phaedrus' presentation of love shows it to be somewhere in between courage and cowardice. The lover performs the courageous act, but not out of an understanding of the nature of courage. Love, however, seems to provide true opinion of courage, whereby the lover performs the same action as does the courageous person. One might ask then, if the act itself is the same in the case of the lover and the courageous person, then what is left to distinguish between the two, and more than that, how can we judge one to be greater than the other, as Rosen mistakenly does? In the *Meno*, Socrates argues that true opinion and knowledge produce the same result in practice. He uses the example of two guides: one who knows the way to Larissa and has traveled the road before, and another, who while not knowing for certain how to get to Larissa, having never been there, judges correctly the way to get there. Socrates concludes of the latter man,

> ... [A]s long as he has correct opinion on the points about which the other has knowledge, he will be just as good a guide, believing the truth but not knowing it ... Therefore true opinion is as good a guide as knowledge for the purpose of acting rightly. That is what we left out just now in our discussion of the nature of virtue, when we said that knowledge is the only guide to right action. There was also, it seems, true opinion.[29]

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[29] Plato, *Meno*, 97b-c. An examination of the nature of true opinion is essential in discussion of the *Symposium*, for as we shall see, Diotima likens the nature of love to the nature of true opinion, for both are between two poles.

Thus, love, which provides true opinion, is highly valuable as a guide for "right action"; any attempt to degrade love's value in light of this passage certainly cannot be condoned.

Certainly Rosen is correct to say that love is not a virtue (Diotima will be explicit about this), yet this is not grounds for looking at love in a negative way – Diotima herself warns us against this way of thinking:

> ... do you imagine that whatever is not beautiful must needs be ugly? ... And what is not skilled ignorant? Have you not observed that there is something halfway between skill and ignorance?[30]

As I have argued, Rosen mistakenly interprets Phaedrus to be saying that because the lover is not courageous from a knowledge of courage, he performs the same act that the courageous man would perform only out of his own selfish desires and his shame at being seen to be a coward. Rosen claims further that the love of the lover is *based* on selfishness. He writes,

> ... Phaedrus comes close to telling us that the lover is not really manly or courageous, but is made to resemble the best man by his passion, no matter how base he may be ... It is entirely compatible with Phaedrus' position to argue that the vulgar acts of vulgar men, so long as they look like the heroic acts of heroes, are equal to them in excellence.[31]

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[30] Plato, *Symposium*, 202a.
[31] Rosen, p. 53.

What Rosen says here is completely *contrary* to Phaedrus' position. In fact, nothing could be less compatible with Phaedrus' position than this view in light of his examples. In the conclusion of his discussion of Phaedrus' speech, Rosen summarizes it as such: "All men are selfish, but the most effective form of selfishness is to make use of the desires of others."[32] If there is anything we can apply from Diotima to this line of reasoning it is this: "... do not compel what is not beautiful to be ugly ... or what is not good to be bad."[33] Rosen says that initially "... Eros emerges clearly from Phaedrus' speech as selflessness, the anti-passion of the lover which corresponds to the anti-passionate selfishness of the beloved." But he claims that Phaedrus "... denies the selflessness of Alcestis by having the gods give her a present of resurrection", as though Alcestis knew somehow that she would get this reward." [34] In Phaedrus' portrayal of Alcestis, this knowledge is certainly not evident.[35] Rosen takes Phaedrus' examples of Alcestis and Achilles as instances of "nobility for the sake of a reward".[36]

Daniel Anderson makes this same mistake:

> [Phaedrus'] ... discussion of that army, ironically, reduces courage to the fear of shame, thus debasing the virtue he is trying to praise. There is for him no such thing as courage, but the

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[33] Plato, *Symposium*, 202b.
[34] Rosen, p. 55.
[35] Plato, *Symposium*, 179b-c.
[36] Rosen, p. 57.

> appearance of courage can be achieved because some fears are greater than others.[37]

This apparently common misreading of Phaedrus leads much of the scholarship to make further incorrect claims about what Phaedrus says of love, shame, and honour. In particular, it cuts off Phaedrus from a continuity that actually exists between him and Diotima. (Rosen sees a continuity among the first three speakers only in terms of the selfishness of love.)[38] The unity of the dialogue is the continuity among the seven speeches. Although the common notions raised by the speakers, i.e., love as an intermediary, love as the dynamic through which the virtues are realized, etc., are treated differently by each speaker, none of them explicitly contradict each other, aside from Socrates' argument that love is not a god. In each speech, contrary to what some of the scholarship believes, love is a positive thing, i.e., love is good. Furthermore, the main notion of continuity among the speeches is that love leads one toward the good. All of the speeches affirm this in some way.

When we come to Socrates' speech, wherein love is dialectically shown to be desire, we might find ourselves asking: What is wrong with

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[37] Daniel E. Anderson, The Masks of Dionysos: A Commentary on Plato's *Symposium* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 23-4. Not only does Anderson make the mistake of interpreting Phaedrus' speech as describing love as being founded on selfishness and shame, but furthermore he moves from this mistake to say that for Phaedrus there is "... no such thing as courage ..." This is yet another example of one running wild with false inferences based on ungrounded interpretations, a trend which seems to be all too common in the scholarship on this matter.

[38] Rosen, p. 65.

desire anyway? Love turns out dialectically to be desire. Desire need not be selfish. Rosen and Anderson jump to the conclusion that the lover's desire on the battlefield is for the continuance of bodily pleasure afterwards. Thus, Rosen claims, "Phaedrus debases the Homeric heroes by identifying their might with a slavish subjection to the beloved."[39] We do not get an explicit examination of the object of desire until the speech of Pausanias. Pausanias makes explicit what the desire should be for: that which is eternal and unchanging, i.e., the soul and virtue. The lover acts courageously from this desire, not from a bodily desire. Phaedrus' examples clearly illustrate the opposite of the position Rosen and Anderson place in Phaedrus' mouth, i.e., that love for Phaedrus is based upon selfish desires. Both Alcestis' and Achilles' willingness to die to save and avenge, respectively, their lovers does not stem from bodily desires: how could the prospect of bodily pleasure possibly be the motivation for such action when they know they will be dead? One must read into Phaedrus' speech something other than what he in fact says in order to contradict what I believe is clearly Phaedrus' true position.[40]

I believe that Cobb is correct when he writes of Phaedrus' speech, "Love is seen as entirely positive in its effect, inspiring virtue in those

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[39] Rosen, p. 53.

[40] Reading Phaedrus' examples in the light and context in which he himself presents them cannot, I believe, lead one to conclude other than that love involves selfless action.

who have it."[41] As I hope to have shown, Phaedrus' contribution to the moving dialectic on the most basic level, if we pay attention to what he actually says rather than to the mistakes which the scholarship perpetrates, is precisely that love involves virtuous self sacrifice as shown rhetorically through his examples. The examples show that this love need not be restricted to the traditional lover/beloved relationship, but extends to heterosexual relationships, i.e., is universal; and further, the virtuous act can be performed by the woman as well as the man, and by the younger as well as the older. In this sense, Phaedrus begins the universalization of love, the next great step of which, as we shall see, is taken by Eryximachus. On a more complex level, in Phaedrus' speech love is intrinsically related to conduct, and as an intermediary between virtue and vice, it is capable of elevating one to virtuous action. Love is a moving dynamic, a kind of kinetic intermediation. Related to this point, the dialectical seed is planted for this universal truth that will later become explicit: love is not a virtue, but rather, the dynamic through which the virtues are realized. Furthermore, this mediator is *necessary* if one is ever going to be able to attain the good. Phaedrus, coming the closest he does to a definition of love, says that Love "... is the ancient source of all our highest good ... [It is] that contempt for the vile, and

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[41] Cobb, p. 64.

emulation of the good, without which neither cities nor citizens are capable of any great or noble work."[42] It is the function of love to elevate the lower to the higher. Love can elevate those with even the basest desires to perform courageous acts, yet their desires need not be assumed to be base. Yet even the basest desires implicitly express the absolute desire for the good, which is love itself. Thus, love, even at this early stage stands in an essential relation to the good. As early as Phaedrus, love is an intermediary, elevating the base to the virtuous – a principle of motion, here implicitly related to true opinion. Conduct is always an element of love right from the beginning, particularly in its characterization as good or bad. The movement of the dialectic certainly has begun with a tremendously rich start in this first speech. Yet without this implicit light present within, we could not arrive at the splendid vision yet to come.

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[42] Plato, *Symposium*, 178c-d.

1. 2 THE SPEECH OF PAUSANIAS

We should be aware from the start that Pausanias' speech will break new ground, for we are told that it is remembered whereas the speeches between it and that of Phaedrus are forgotten.[43] Pausanias makes explicit the question of the nature of the object of love. He introduces what the proper object of love is and indicates, yet falters on what the proper conduct between lover and beloved should be. Although the proper conduct between lover and beloved is concretized later in the dialogue through the speech of Alcibiades, which describes how Socrates, the perfect model of the lover, behaves toward his beloved, it is Pausanias who first raises the question. It is certainly true, as Cobb notes, that "The behaviour of Socrates as reported by Alcibiades seems to stand in marked contrast to Pausanias' view ..."[44] In short, Pausanias presents the role of the lover as the responsibility to teach virtue to his beloved, who in turn provides the lover with sexual gratification. Socrates however, while he teaches virtue to his beloved Alcibiades, denies Alcibiades' physical advances. We shall examine this in detail in Chapter 3. Cobb also points out two prevailing interpretations of Pausanias' speech in the scholarship. He writes,

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[43] "[Phaedrus' speech] was followed by several others, which my friend could not recollect at all clearly; so he passed them over and related that of Pausanias ..." (*Ibid.*, 180c).

[44] Cobb, p. 65.

> It is tempting to assume that he [Pausanias] is articulating a defense and explanation of actual practice in Athens, or at least, providing an idealized view of practice among the elite. On the other hand, the speech may also be read as an example of self-serving cleverness on the part of a man who enjoys this kind of relationship.[45]

Again, I believe Rosen, in his overly complex fabrication of Pausanias' intentions, falls into the latter category, missing the main contribution of this speech. Rosen writes, "Pausanias ... is seriously concerned with neither logic nor morality. He is engaged in an intricate and sophistic attempt to secure his own advantage."[46] Alan Bloom also believes that Pausanias has a hidden agenda, seeing his speech as an attempt to defend his own lifestyle. Pederasty, he says, "... needs a kind of justification, and Pausanias, who turns out to be a rather timid fellow, wants the protection of *nomos* for his practice."[47] It is, however, these positions that need justification. Who knows exactly what Pausanias' sexual practices entail? Certainly they are not explicitly clear in the dialogue.[48] Such attempts to characterize Pausanias as desperately defending his own lifestyle involve a lot of "reading into" his actual words,

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Rosen, p. 63.

[47] Alan Bloom, Love and Friendship (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p. 459.

[48] In defense of Rosen and Bloom, one might point to a reference Aristophanes makes later in the dialogue, suggesting a homosexual relationship between Pausanias and Agathon at 193b-c. He says, referring to those who found their other halves, "And let not Eryximachus retort on my speech with a comic mock, and say I refer to Pausanias and Agathon." This reference is not enough to characterize Pausanias' intent in speaking in such a negative, defensive, and self-serving way.

and reflect the bias of these scholars. Such attempts, I believe, are neither adequately grounded nor helpful. However, Bloom is correct in saying that "Pausanias is going to get himself into one little problem ... : if souls are the concern, what is so important about this bodily desire and its satisfaction?"[49] We must remember that this is a moving dialectic, and later in the dialogue Alcibiades' description of Socrates' conduct will contradict what Pausanias says here in relation to the conduct of the lover in that the physical act drops out of the picture altogether. Pausanias, however, does make an important contribution to the dialogue as a whole, rhetorically introducing notions that will later be investigated and established dialectically.

Pausanias, as does Phaedrus, presupposes the definition of love, but distinguishes between the one and the many. He claims that there are two kinds of love: one which moves one to act virtuously, and another which moves one to act viciously. Love is split in two and will later be brought back together by Eryximachus. Love, which is implicitly desire here, is neither good nor bad in itself. Rather, it is how one acts upon his/her desire, according to Pausanias, that renders an act virtuous or vicious. Pausanias says that "... Love is not of himself either admirable or noble, but only when he moves us to love nobly."[50]

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 461.
[50] Plato, *Symposium*, 181.

However, Pausanias' division of love is problematic. Initially, he says that there are two distinct loves: the heavenly, noble Aphrodite and the earthly, base Aphrodite. Yet here he seems to speak of one love which, as desire, has the power to move one to act in two different ways. As I have said, Eryximachus will do more rhetorically to clear up this tension.

Either way, love is again presented here, as it was by Phaedrus, as a *principle of motion*, neither good nor bad in itself, yet moving in a realm between the two poles. Love is explicitly and more complexly related to conduct in this speech, again appearing as an instigator or catalyst for action. Love itself, considered apart from the conduct inspired by it, is worthy of neither admiration nor disdain. It can, however, move one to either good or bad actions. Thus, where in the speech of Phaedrus love\desire moves the soldier to act courageously or virtuously, in Pausanias' speech, we have the suggestion that desire can also move one to act viciously. In both speeches, however (and throughout the rest of the dialogue for that matter), love is intrinsically related to conduct. It is also interesting to note that if love itself is neither admirable nor noble, as Pausanias says, then in itself, it is not necessarily worthy of praise. This prefigures Socrates' dialectical position that love is not a great god. The figure of love as a god worthy of praise loses hold as we move through Phaedrus to Aristophanes, and is dialectically destroyed by Socrates.

As we have seen, according to Pausanias love itself (which is implicitly desire here) is neither good nor bad. Rather, it is how the love is manifested or the way in which it is expressed that renders it worthy of either praise or blame. This claim gains dialectical ground when love is shown to be desire. It is not clear at this point whether the two lovers' actions are the same or not. Initially, it seems that the sexual act of the Uranian and Pandemic lovers is the same, yet that of the former is admirable, for he has the soul in mind, and that of the latter is culpable, for he is concerned only with the body. Pausanias says,

> Now the vicious lover is the follower of the earthly Love who desires the body rather than the soul; his heart is set on what is mutable and must therefore be inconstant ... whereas the lover whose heart is touched by moral beauties is constant all his life, for he has become one with what will never fade.[51]

If the act of each lover is the same, how is the manner in which it is performed altered in the case of the Uranian lover to make the act good, and in the case of the Pandemic lover evil? Is it anything more than what the lover has in mind, i.e., the body or the soul, or intends for the relationship, i.e., for it to last temporarily or to survive? It seems as though the duration of the love depends upon the duration of the object. If the object of love wanes or degenerates, so too will the love of this

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[51] *Ibid.*, 183e.

object; an eternal love, according to Pausanias, requires an eternal object. Pausanias continues,

> To do the thing basely is to gratify a wicked man in a wicked manner: 'nobly' means having to do with a good man in a good manner.[52]

Notice how Pausanias defines the terms 'base' and 'noble' in terms of the conduct of the beloved. Pausanias' great achievement in his speech, i.e., the explicit emergence of the importance of proper conduct in relation to the proper object of desire, is explicitly connected more with the beloved who gratifies (yet it also applies to the lover as we shall see). He then proceeds to describe the conduct of the two lovers.

> By 'wicked' we mean that popular lover, who craves the body rather than the soul: as he is not in love with what abides, he himself is not abiding. As soon as the bloom of the body he so loved begins to fade he 'flutters off and is gone,' ... whereas the lover of a nature that is worthy abides throughout life, as being fused into one with the abiding.[53]

It seems as though for Pausanias, the base act is physically indistinguishable from the virtuous act (as are the act of the lover and that of the innately courageous man in Phaedrus' speech, although there, neither is base), and thus implementing the law he proposes would

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[52] *Ibid.*, 183d-e.
[53] *Ibid.*, 183e-184a.

be difficult if not impossible until after the fact. (Pausanias himself seems to realize this complication.)[54] Yet, Pausanias insists on a distinction between the "manner" in which the act is performed in each case. What exactly is this manner, and does the higher love have a physical element?

Pausanias is not clear about this. This distinction, implicitly present in Pausanias, is not made explicit until the speech of Alcibiades, where indeed the sexual act is different in that there is a mingling of minds/souls between Uranian lover and beloved rather than a mingling of bodies as between Pandemic lover and beloved. Pausanias takes us to the summit rhetorically in that the proper relationship between lover and beloved is based on and remains within that which is eternal, i.e., the soul; yet in effect, he places this knowledge in the mind of the beloved only. He says,

> ... if in any meeting between a lover and his beloved each has his set of guidelines – the lover appreciating that any service he performs for a beloved who gratifies him would be morally acceptable, and the boy appreciating that any favours he does for a man who is teaching him things and making him good would be morally acceptable ...[55]

Pausanias places the wicked lover who "... desires the body rather than the soul ..." in contrast to the Uranian or noble lover who, accordingly,

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[54] See *Ibid.*, 185a-b. The beloved is admired in his willingness to take a chance on any lover whom he believes might make him morally better. It seems that there is no way to tell for sure which lovers can make the beloved better before a relationship is started, and thus the beloved can often be mistaken.
[55] *Ibid.*, 184d.

loves the soul of the beloved.[56] However, in his failure to let go of the physical act, Pausanias takes this knowledge away from the lover, making him out to be inferior to his beloved. For in the relation described above, the beloved desires the wisdom of the lover, yet the lover desires the body of the beloved. If the lover possesses this knowledge concerning the value of the soul, why is he "enslaved", as Pausanias says, to the body? It is the beloved who has a love of that which lasts, a love which moves him to seek out a teacher of virtue, not the lover. The lover becomes the wicked man described above, i.e., he who "... craves the body and not the soul ..." as an end.[57] The love of the lover in Pausanias' speech is not purified: he desires the mutable body of the beloved and therefore, his love is not stable. According to Pausanias' own argument concerning the nature of the proper object of love, he should conclude that there is no physical exchange between lover and beloved. There is a higher implicit dialectic progressing here in which Pausanias participates.

Pausanias is confused about the notion of proper conduct because he does not understand fully what he has begun to grasp. The dialectic is moving, however, and we again see the problem with these traditional roles of lover and beloved. Pausanias' distinction between the proper and

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[56] *Ibid.*, 183e.
[57] *Ibid.*, 183e.

improper objects of love raises the question: what does the lover achieve in the exchange? Now that we have some idea of the kind of thing that is worthy of love, i.e., the eternal soul (the object of desire has yet to be universalized as the eternal good), the lover seems to get the 'raw end of the deal' in the exchange, i.e., he receives mere sexual gratification in exchange for his salvific wisdom. Later in the dialogue Socrates will explicitly point out this imbalance in Pausanias' (and perhaps the socially accepted Athenian's) view of this relationship when he tells Alcibiades

> ... if you're trying to barter your own beauty for the beauty you have found in me, you're driving a very hard bargain. You're trying to exchange the semblance of beauty for the thing itself – like Diomede and Glaucus swapping bronze for gold.[58]

This again, however, contrary to what Rosen will tell us, suggests that the lover is not selfish at all. He indeed gives his gold for bronze, and in Socrates' case, he gives his gold, i.e., his grasp of virtue, for nothing. In this relationship, the lover, as a personification of love, raises up his beloved. The claim that love is more akin to the lover than the beloved is not explicitly raised until the speech of Socrates, wherein it is dialectically grounded.

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[58] *Ibid.*, 218e.

At this point in the dialectic we can observe what is happening to the traditional lover/beloved relationship. Phaedrus' speech indicates that there is something wrong with these categories, as Ruprecht notes.[59] The ultimate sacrifice, which only love can motivate, is made by both men and women. The love relationship is ideally between lover and lover, as we shall see in the absolute self-reflection in Aristophanes, and not necessarily between lover and beloved. In the speech of Pausanias, the lover takes on the role of a teacher, providing training in virtue. The sexual act becomes problematic as we have seen, thus setting the stage for Alcibiades' speech wherein Socrates' love for Alcibiades takes on a new meaning: there is no physical exchange. However, there is a psychical exchange which produces ideal offspring as we shall see.

In summary, Pausanias tells us what the proper object of love is. If love is to last, its object must also be something that lasts. The proper object of love, demonstrated rhetorically at this point, is the eternal soul. Furthermore, proper conduct (or the higher form of conduct since there is no purification of the body in Plato) between lovers consists of a mingling of minds rather than bodies, and in this sense, Pausanias anticipates Diotima. Pausanias sees this but fails to let go of the physical act of the lover, as I have said, making him to be the lesser of the two. In

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[59] "... there is something wrong with the crude categories of lover and beloved." Ruprecht, p. 55.

Plato there is no explicit doctrine of the purification of the body; thus, as we shall see in Socrates' behaviour, the body is left behind or, in a sense, detached. Furthermore, the lover/beloved relationship takes on a new form, i.e., that of teacher/student. Also, we remember that love for Pausanias has somehow split in two, thus creating a dialectical tension between the one and the many, a tension that will be taken up by Eryximachus. Keeping this progression in mind, we now turn to his speech.

1. 3 THE SPEECH OF ERYXIMACHUS

Eryximachus introduces the notion of love as a cosmic principle of unity. He does not deal so much with the nature of the object of love as he does with the nature of love itself and what it does. In this sense the speech of Eryximachus has more in common with that of Phaedrus, rather than with that of Pausanias. However, Eryximachus himself claims a continuity with Pausanias' speech in that he will "... append a conclusion ..." to Pausanias' speech, which he "... did not properly finish ..."[60] Pausanias has raised some important points which Eryximachus treats as premises to the conclusion that is his own speech. Eryximachus elevates the discussion beyond the love between people to love between things (which might initially seem strange), thus rendering the principle of love to be a universal principle. Paul Epstein writes,

> ... by making eros a cosmic as well as human principle, the speech raises the discussion beyond the pedestrian level assumed by those speakers who limit themselves to the current Athenian social order.[61]

Although Phaedrus has already in his own way surpassed this social order through his choice of examples, love, as a force of attraction or

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[60] Plato, *Symposium*, 186a.
[61] Paul Epstein, "The Treatment of Poetry in the Symposium of Plato", Animus 4 (1999) [http://www.mun.ca/animus/1999vol4/epstein4.htm], paragraph 16.

unity, had yet to move beyond human affairs. However, Eryximachus says,

> ... besides attracting the souls of men to human beauty, Love has many other objects and many other subjects, and ... his influence may be traced ... in every form of existence – so great, so wonderful, and so all-embracing is the power of Love in every activity, whether sacred of profane.[62]

Although for Eryximachus Love is explicitly still a god, he describes its action as a force or impulse that attracts.[63] He says, "... Love is not merely an impulse of human souls towards beautiful men but the attraction of all creatures to a great variety of things ..."[64] The focus on love as a god is dwindling, or falling into a state of lesser importance. This expansion of the realm in which love attracts things to one another beyond humanity, and as based on mere physical beauty, is an anticipation of Diotima's definition of Love as the desire for the eternal possession of the universal good. We shall see how this unfolds in the second chapter.

Although Eryximachus claims that the power of love has a universal domain, he focuses mainly on the body using the analogy of medicine, which is fitting for a physician such as himself. Again, as we

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[62] Plato, *Symposium*, 186a-b.
[63] *Ibid.*, 186b.
[64] *Ibid.*, 186a.

have seen in the speech of Pausanias, there are good and bad objects of desire, which themselves render the desires good or bad. Love itself is intermediate; the quality of the love depends upon the quality of its object. Eryximachus adopts Pausanias' principle into his own speech. Yet although Eryximachus says Pausanias' "... division of Love into two sorts appears to ... [be] a good one ...", he will later refer to this characteristic of love as being a "double Love", suggesting a differentiation of love rather than a division, thus maintaining love's wholeness.[65]

Eryximachus' speech is working on two levels: first, he is describing the unifying power of Love, and second, he is himself unifying that which has gone before him. For Pausanias, there are two distinct loves, whereas for Eryximachus, it seems that there is one power that presides over a multitude of things. "... [U]niversal is the sway of this god over all affairs both human and divine," claims Eryximachus.[66] Mitchell writes, paraphrasing Eryximachus,

> Eros has once more become one, complete. Never again in these speeches will he be divided as he has been up to now. This new Eros has great – in fact, complete – power.[67]

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[65] *Ibid.*
[66] *Ibid.*, 186a-b.
[67] Mitchell, p. 63.

These matters have yet to be dialectically established, yet the defining elements of love are being rhetorically brought out as we are going through.

Continuing with his analogy of medicine, Eryximachus claims that the role of the physician is to cultivate and even create attractions within those parts of the body that yield healthy bodily states. Here we have a goal in mind, i.e., love's purpose is to produce some state. Although we have had the notion of immortality introduced to us by Phaedrus, the goal of love as such takes greater hold in Eryximachus' speech. Again, this is an anticipation of Diotima's claim that men desire the good to achieve the state of happiness, with which immortality is essentially connected. The healthy bodily state, according to Eryximachus, achieves a kind of harmony or attunement, a subject dealt with in great detail in both Plato's *Phaedo* and his *Philebus*. In addition to cultivating those attractions that give rise to healthy bodies, the physician also removes those attractions which give rise to unhealthy bodies. In this sense, what the physician does in the realm of the body, the lover, introduced by Pausanias as a kind of teacher of the beloved, does in the realm of the soul.

The lover/beloved relationship has been and will be surpassed by Phaedrus and Aristophanes, respectively, and has even been surpassed by Pausanias although he fails to realize that he has done so. (Pausanias

points to the soul as the proper object of love yet hangs on to the physical sexual act.) There has been explicit rhetorical and implicit dialectical tension between the categories of 'lover' and 'beloved' in relation to physical conduct, such that the categories in relation to such conduct are beginning to break down. However, the lover/beloved relationship does remain, yet in a new and altered state. The traditional lover/beloved relationship becomes a kind of teacher/student relationship, wherein love is still able to take its true form. Proper physical conduct, as will be demonstrated by Socrates in Alcibiades' speech, will change from that expressed by Pausanias, as will the object of desire change, this also first made explicit by Pausanias.

Eryximachus also speaks explicitly about the lover/beloved relationship, maintaining that such relationships can be healthy or unhealthy depending on that which is desired, just as the body can be made healthy or unhealthy depending upon the quality of the food that it desires. In this regard, he agrees with Pausanias' claim that the quality of the love, and indeed the quality of the lover him/herself, depends upon the quality of its or his/her object.[68] He says,

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[68] Pausanias says, "A lover is bad if he is of the common type, who loves the body rather than the mind. This makes him inconstant, because there's no constancy in the object of his desires ... on the other hand, a lover who loves goodness of character is constant for life, because of the constancy of the object he's been united with." (Plato, *Symposium*, 183d-e.)

> ... it is right to yield to a virtuous and wrong to yield to a vicious lover, and similarly, in the case of the body, it is both right and necessary to gratify such desires as are sound and healthy in each particular case, ... [b]ut it is utterly wrong to indulge such desires as are bad and morbid ...[69]

In Eryximachus' speech, we are somewhat in between what Pausanias and Diotima say concerning love. For Pausanias, there are two loves: the heavenly and the earthly Aphrodite, each with its representative lover, while for Diotima, love is explicitly universal desire, the object of which will emerge as the good. In Eryximachus' speech Love is not yet desire, but a single, universal power of attraction, according to which, one can be attracted to noble or base things. In what is explicitly a discussion of the proper practice of medicine, Eryximachus further explains what the lover does in his relationship with the beloved, thus further developing what Pausanias says about this relationship. The physician and the lover/teacher

> ... can distinguish ... between the nobler and baser Loves, and can effect such alteration that the one passion is replaced by the other; and he will be deemed a good practitioner who is expert in producing Love where it ought to flourish but exists not, and in removing it from where it should not be.[70]

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[69] *Ibid.*, 186c.
[70] *Ibid.*, 186c-d.

For the physician, the desire created and cultivated is among like parts of the body, thus giving rise to bodily health. For the lover/teacher, the desire created and cultivated is between beloved/student and virtue, thus giving rise to psychical health.

Rosen's misreading of the first two speeches is carried into that of Eryximachus, for he is mistaken in saying that "... the three defenders of pederasty are related by their selfishness."[71] None should be classified as "defenders of pederasty", for not only is this not their intention, but not all of them even focus on pederasty. If we can classify the first three contributors to this moving dialectic as anything, they can be called 'praisers of love'. But neither is this phrase accurate, for while each says he intends to praise love as a god, each moves toward the dialectical truth without explicitly realizing it: love is not a god.

Rosen raises a problem, however: "If there is one Eros with a double propensity for evil as well as good [as in Eryximachus' rhetorical definition of love as the desire for either healthy or unhealthy things], what is the principle by which Eros is guided in the proper direction?"[72] I think it is clear from what has been said so far that the principle that guides Eros in the proper direction is the lover/teacher, whose conduct is introduced by Pausanias, yet is problematic as we have seen.

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[71] Rosen, p. 92.
[72] Rosen, pp. 100-1.

Furthermore, Eryximachus suggests that not only is this principle manifest in the lover/teacher, but in any specialist who cultivates these proper attractions. But later, love itself is claimed to be the guide, i.e., love is both that which is cultivated and that which cultivates. The lover has to direct the beloved toward those things that are worthy of love, i.e., virtue and the soul. How and whether this is possible is again another question, one which Socrates examines elsewhere.[73]

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Eryximachus, aside from his universalization of love as a cosmic principle of attraction, and the statement of consequences raised relating to the lover/beloved relationship, is his explicitly connecting humanity and divinity through the power of love, thus culminating in a communion between the two. Already this connection has been implicitly present since the speech of Phaedrus where love is intrinsically and intermediately connected to death and immortality. It is in Eryximachus' speech, however, that this connection reaches rhetorical completion. (We shall also see this

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[73] In the *Meno* we find that virtue seems to be something distinct from yet connected to knowledge, and thus according to the premise 'If virtue is knowledge, then virtue can be taught', it seems as though virtue cannot be taught. We shall not pursue the intricacies of that dialogue; however, the theory of anamnesis leaves open the possibility that virtue can be recollected, and Socrates is seen in that dialogue in the position of the teacher, not imparting knowledge from without, but reminding Meno's slave boy of that which he eternally knows. In light of what Eryximachus says rhetorically about medicine, we move further in understanding the lover/beloved relationship as proposed by Pausanias. The lover must produce and cultivate a love of virtue in the beloved. Yet what is meant by cultivation requires further clarification.

connection demonstrated mythically in the speech of Aristophanes). In the speech of Diotima, this interrelationship is reached dialectically.

Eryximachus is the first to introduce explicitly the notion of communion between humanity and divinity. This, Eryximachus claims, is the function of love. By its power alone humanity and divinity are brought together. Love, as a kinetic principle of attraction, i.e., what it has been since the beginning of the dialogue, rhetorically takes its proper form. This power of communion will dialectically emerge as the definitive role of love grasped as what Diotima will call an "all powerful spirit".[74] Here, in Eryximachus' speech, although not dialectically defined as such, appears the rhetorical notion of the role of love as a spirit in between humanity and divinity where, as Eryximachus says, it "... exerts ... a complete power."[75]

As we have seen, whereas medicine requires the physician to regulate and cultivate certain organic attractions to create and maintain health in the body, Eryximachus introduces the notion of the diviner who is required to regulate those desires of humans that give rise to proper relationships with the gods. Eryximachus says,

> ... all sacrifices and ceremonies controlled by divination, namely, all means of communion between gods and men, are only

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[74] Plato, *Symposium*, 202f.
[75] *Ibid.*, 188d.

> concerned with either the preservation or the cure of love [i.e., producing the proper and orderly love].[76]

Again, love is, as Eryximachus says, a force of attraction. Humanity's relationship to the gods is dependent upon that which humanity desires. Eryximachus defines impiety as "... the result of refusing to gratify the orderly Love or to honour and prefer him in all our affairs, ... [as opposed to] yielding to the other [Love] ..."[77] By this definition then, piety is the result or consequence of the gratification of the orderly love, i.e., the attraction to those things that give rise to bodily and psychical health or attunement. Pausanias has told us that virtue and the development of the soul are among these proper objects of love.

Eryximachus says that it is the task of the diviner to produce and cultivate this love in the same way that the physician produces and cultivates the proper love in the body. He says,

> To divination is appointed the task of supervising and treating the health of these Loves; wherefore that art, as knowing what human love-affairs will lead to seemliness and pious observance, is indeed a purveyor of friendship between gods and men.[78]

The lover, therefore, in the lover/beloved relationship, which is evolving into a dialectical teacher/student relationship, acts as a diviner,

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[76] *Ibid.*, 188b-c.
[77] *Ibid.*, 188c.
[78] *Ibid.*, 188c-d.

cultivating the proper love in the beloved and thus giving rise to psychical health and piety, just as the physician gives rise to bodily health and piety. Piety is the ultimate goal here, for it is piety, as earlier demonstrated by Phaedrus' examples, which achieves the favour of the gods and therefore, immortality.[79] Simply put, Love provides salvation, a notion that is further developed in the speech of Aristophanes.

Furthermore, as I have just suggested, if it is this proper love which the gods themselves love, then universally, this love, wherever it is cultivated, contributes to the salvation of humanity. Universally, piety, as Eryximachus rhetorically defines it here, is the gratification of the orderly love. The physician, in his cultivation of the proper attractions in the body also exhibits piety, thus contributing to the salvation of his patient and himself, just as the teacher, in cultivating this same love in the mind, contributes to the salvation of the student. The objects of love are important insofar as their attractions exhibit this orderly love; some of the examples of them have been virtue, the soul, self-sacrifice, and certain harmonized parts of the body. However, the proper or orderly love is universal in its power, i.e., it can be, as Eryximachus says, found in all affairs human and non-human; its power is complete.

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[79] Alcestis and Achilles are rewarded with immortality for their actions in accordance with the harmonious love, i.e., the love with the proper object.

The physician knows which attractions are manifestations of the orderly love and cultivates them, thus giving rise to bodily health. He/she is pious insofar as he/she gratifies this orderly love. The diviner is a special case, for what are like parts of the body in medicine are analogous to humanity and divinity in divination. The diviner knows which attractions between men and gods are manifestations of the orderly love. The diviner gratifies the orderly love between gods and men and in doing so, is pious. Generally however, anyone in his/her technē or art who cultivates this love, which still has yet to be dialectically defined and established, is a diviner. It seems as well that true opinion on these matters is enough to cultivate these love affairs, as is evident in Phaedrus' examples, and from what I have taken from the *Meno*.[80] Eryximachus continues with this notion of salvation, which has been implicitly present from the beginning in relation to death and immortality. Most importantly, Eryximachus presents love as that power which renders possible communion between the gods and men. Aristophanes will take up this notion of salvation in his commentary on

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[80] One might ask here: where does the philosopher fit in? The philosopher is the lover of wisdom who practices his/her art in dialectic. He/she possesses true opinion and cultivates it in others through discussion, giving rise to a love of wisdom and virtue. Thus, the philosopher is the completion of the teacher in the lover/beloved relationship. We should look to Socrates' behaviour if we wish to see what exactly it is that the philosopher does. This will be examined in Chapter 3.

the human condition and its intrinsic relation to love and the longing for completion.

1. 4 THE SPEECH OF ARISTOPHANES

Having looked at the rhetorically presented notions of piety and impiety in the speech of Eryximachus, we shall now examine their movement into the speech of Aristophanes. He tells us a myth, somewhat similar to the tower of Babel story in the Bible, about the consequences of the ultimate hubris and impiety, and how our once-complete selves, completely unaided, attempted "... to scale the heights of heaven and set upon the gods."[81]

Aristophanes begins by speaking of the power of love, which he mistakenly identifies as a great god, as do all those who have gone before him. He says,

> He of all gods is most friendly to men; he succours mankind and heals those ills whose cure must be the highest happiness of the human race.[82]

If love is to succour humanity, as Aristophanes suggests, then humanity must be in some distress. This distress is want, and it is a result of our great impiety, as he will tell us in what, of all the speeches, is the most dramatic and vivid account of the human condition. The myth of the circle-people is a brilliant, and at the same time comic and tragic, explanation of human nature. In short, Aristophanes claims that each

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[81] *Ibid.*, 190b. See Genesis 11: 1-9.
[82] *Ibid.*, 189d.

human being longs for completion or wholeness. Originally he says, each being was in fact two beings in one. Anyone who reads Plato's *Symposium* cannot forget Aristophanes' description of these beings, each with two faces (one on either side of the head), with four arms and four legs attached to their round bodies. Furthermore, he claims that there were not two but three sexes, for each being, as composed of what we now would take to be two beings, was either male-male, female-female, or male-female.

This heretofore strange and comical story, however, takes a dramatic and tragic turn. Aristophanes says,

> Now, they were of surprising strength and vigour, and so lofty in their notions that they even conspired against the gods; and the same story is told of them as Homer relates of Ephialtes and Otus, that scheming to assault the gods in fight they essayed to mount high heaven. [83]

Impiety, first introduced explicitly by Eryximachus, is now given a dramatic context. In this classic example of the Greek notion of hubris, the circle-people overestimate their own ability and power, thinking themselves to be greater than the gods. Zeus, however, splits each being in half. As in the Babel story where the people are scattered, these now-split circle-beings are scattered as well. Splitting, confusing, and scattering, both in Aristophanes' myth and in the tower of Babel story

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[83] *Ibid.*, 190b-c.

are ways to deal with impiety. This splitting is a denial and removal of power - what Aristophanes himself calls, "... a lessening of their strength."[84] Furthermore, there is the prospect of being split again "if they continue turbulent and do not chose to keep quiet ..."[85]

Aristophanes then tells us of how Apollo went about healing these people. However, he says,

> Now when our first form had been cut in two, each half in longing for its fellow would come to it again; and then they would fling their arms about each other and in mutual embraces yearn to be grafted together ...[86]

Thus, Zeus, through further manipulation of their anatomy, made possible "... conception and continuation of their kind ..."[87] In each being's longing for its other half, be it male for male, female for female, male for female, or female for male, we have Aristophanes' mythical deduction of the sexual preferences. While the heterosexual relationship is presented as being more advantageous to the extent that its union begets children, Aristophanes gives precedence to the traditional male lover/beloved relationship. He has no dialectical ground to do so, but has again, as we have seen in the speech of Pausanias, fallen into this social form. In his presentation, there is no dialectical reason to make either

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[84] *Ibid.*, 190c.
[85] *Ibid.*, 190d.
[86] *Ibid.*, 191a.
[87] *Ibid.*, 191c.

sexual preference greater than the other. Although Aristophanes particularizes the desire of the lover "... to be joined and fused with his beloved that the two might be made one" in the male-male relationship, this desire is universal, i.e., no matter what the relationship, this desire exists. Remember that the superiority of this relationship has been under some tension since the speech of Phaedrus, as we have seen.

Aristophanes, in his summary of the moral of this myth rhetorically defines love. He says,

> The cause of it all [i.e., the longing or desire] is this, that our original form was as I have described, and we were entire; and the craving and pursuit of that entirety is called love. Formerly, as I have said, we were one; but now for our sins we are all dispersed by God ...[88]

We had thought that we could reach heaven on our own, but as Phaedrus has said from the beginning, love "... is the cause of all our highest blessings ... without which it is impossible for city or person to perform any high and noble deeds."[89] Aristophanes tells us why the lover loves, using the term 'lover' generally here. He presents love as a desire for completion, and implicitly shows us why the lover is not selfish. What we implicitly have is an absolute self reflection of the one into the other. The lover sees himself in the one he loves and at the same time sees the

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[88] *Ibid.*, 192e-193a.
[89] *Ibid.*, 178c-d.

one he loves in himself. This occurs here at the level of true opinion and is present at the start in Phaedrus' speech: the lover on the battlefield inspired by love acts courageously yet knows not why he acts so. He is unaware that it is himself he sees in the beloved and the beloved he sees in himself in a mutual self-accountability. The soul, as we have seen rhetorically, is the proper object of love, and it is the soul that is the same in the lover and the beloved. This notion of self reflection and the difficult problem of the one and the many are dealt with more explicitly in Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates says (here in relation to the beloved),

> ... he loves, yet knows not what he loves; he does not understand, he cannot tell what has come upon him ... he cannot account for it, not realizing that his lover is as it were a mirror in which he beholds himself.[90]

This look into the *Phaedrus* points toward an important aspect of this desire to be made whole. As Martha Nussbaum points out, the desire for completion is not merely physical as one might interpret from Aristophanes' explicit focus on bodies: there is a psychical aspect as well. Nussbaum writes,

> But this impossible story of welding [i.e., physical procreation] is a far simpler miracle than the one that would have to take place if

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[90] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 255d.

> they were really to become one. For these creatures have souls; and their desire for unity is a desire of the soul, a desire of desires, projects, [and] aspirations ...[91]

The focus on the mingling of souls rather than that of bodies is taken up by Socrates in his speech and concretized in his behaviour in the speech of Alcibiades. However, it is important to note at this point that the soul as well as the body desires the completion described by Aristophanes.

Aristophanes gives us a mythical genealogy of love. Love is both the consequence of impiety and the mode through which we can now attain salvation. Love comes *after* the ultimate impious act, for only after this act is love needed. By embracing love, Aristophanes says, it is possible to attain friendship with the gods; for as the previous speakers have shown us, particularly Eryximachus, it is the cultivation of this love that pleases god. Through this cultivation, we attain salvation. Aristophanes says,

> ... we ought all to exhort others to a pious observance of the gods in all things, so that we may escape harm and attain to bliss under the gallant leadership of Love. Let none in act oppose him – and it is opposing him to incur the hate of Heaven: if we make friends with the god and are reconciled, we shall have the fortune that falls to few in our day, of discovering our proper favorites.[92]

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[91] Nussbaum, p. 175.
[92] Plato, *Symposium*, 193a-b.

Love is characterized as a leader, helping us to act piously. "Love is the god who brings this about; he fully deserves our hymns" exclaims Aristophanes.[93] Certainly love does indeed deserve these hymns, but not as a god, as we shall see.

Aristophanes' great achievement is his contribution of the anagogical role of love. The focus of his speech is on salvation, which is achieved only by our completion. Love, he claims, is itself both the desire for and pursuit of wholeness and that through which this wholeness can be attained. Although explicitly calling love a god, Aristophanes' description of love depicts it as something quite different from both god and man, yet acting on behalf of both, bringing each to the other. Aristophanes' distinction between love and god prepares for Diotima's definition of love as mediator. Again, love is the dynamic through which the virtues are realized. In Phaedrus' speech the virtue is courage, whereas for Aristophanes, it is piety. Piety is brought about by love, thus making peace with god beyond the iniquity of humanity.

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[93] *Ibid.*, 193d.

1. 5 THE SPEECH OF AGATHON

Initially, the speech of Agathon seems like a step back from that of Aristophanes and perhaps even those of Eryximachus and Pausanias. However, this being the last speech before that of Socrates, it acts as a set-up for the explicit dialectical inquiry to come. Not only is Agathon's the first speech to raise explicitly the notion of definition, but the speech itself demonstrates the need for such definition. The great achievement of Agathon is his bringing into the dialectic the explicit notion of definition and the suggestion of a dialectical method, after which there should be no turning back. Agathon, however, in his own speech fails to put into place the method he himself suggests. First, Agathon tells us the method he will use, and at the same time, expresses his dissatisfaction with the previous speeches.

> I'd like to start my speech by explaining the tactics of my speeches, before actually turning to my speech. You see, I think that all the previous speakers weren't really praising the god; they were congratulating the human race on how much they thrive on goods the god contrives. Nothing has been said, however, about the actual nature of the being who bestows these gifts.[94]

As I have suggested, the nature of love as a god, as Agathon here points out, has never been the focus of any of the previous speeches. The

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[94] *Ibid.*, 194e-195a.

nature of love is presupposed, and thus the godhood of love is never questioned.

Agathon now continues by telling us how his speech will proceed:

> But there is only one correct approach in composing a eulogy, whatever the topic, and that is to define what the being who is the subject of the speech is in fact like, and what benefits he is responsible for. Accordingly, the proper tactics for us too, in dealing with Love, are first to praise his nature, and then his gifts.[95]

Notice how Agathon finishes off this introduction. He complains that the nature of love has yet to be discussed. He is moving toward the notion of definition and the process of the dialectical method. Yet after this great insight, he closes the discussion of his method by saying that they now must "praise" Love's nature, *not*, as he has suggested, *define* Love's nature. Thus, while Agathon is the first to raise explicitly the notion of definition, the purpose of the dialectical method, he fails to utilize this advance in his own speech.

Many of the scholars who are critical of the speeches before that of Socrates are most so toward that of Agathon. Cobb, who has, on the contrary, been more sympathetic toward the other speeches, taking seriously the view that they each have something to offer, does not go

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[95] *Ibid.*, 195. Lamb translates this passage, "There is but one correct method ...".

easy on Agathon. He says, "The reader is prepared for the worse from Agathon's speech, and we are not disappointed."[96] He continues,

> [The] self-referential character is especially obvious in Agathon's speech. One can easily believe that he has himself in mind as he lists the characteristics of the god: youthful, handsome, graceful, wise, superior to all in his skill as a poet, etc.[97]

In his speech, Agathon emphasizes the mistake that he himself points out in his introduction by praising that which has yet to be defined. This, however, is the last speech before that of Socrates, and it seems that Plato is setting Agathon up as a kind of transition or mediation between the first four speeches and that of Socrates. The claim that love is a god will be defeated by Socrates in short order as a kind of introduction to Socrates' speech. Agathon, however, is compensated by being the one who raises the all important notions of definition and method, even if he himself fails to utilize them.

Agathon's idea of a definition is that of an enumeration of properties. He begins, "... while all gods are blissful, Love ... is the most blissful, as being the most beautiful and the best."[98] In addition to presupposing that love is indeed a god, he merely describes the properties that he believes love to possess. While each of these qualities

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[96] Cobb, p. 68.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[98] Plato, *Symposium*, 195a.

might be part of the nature of love (we shall find out in the next chapter that none of them are), Agathon does not give us the essence, mistaking it for its properties. Furthermore, in his failure to apply reason and dialectical argument to what he says, he fails further in that the properties he mentions are not even properties of love. Without a true definition of the nature or essence of love, the properties of it cannot properly be derived.

Although the importance of definition is Agathon's great contribution to the emerging dialectic, there are a few more things in his speech worth noting in relation to the other speeches. Agathon, like those before him, makes rhetorical progress in describing what love is like. He does not define what love is, as I have shown, but his description adds and fleshes out, even if rhetorically, what is established dialectically by Socrates. Agathon claims in his description that love is not corporeal. What is moving in this description is the implicit truth that love is neither god nor man, but spirit, as we shall see in Chapter 2. Agathon says,

> [Love] ... lives and moves in the softest environment of all. You see, he makes his home in gods' and men's dispositions and minds – and even then, not indiscriminately in every mind, because he withdraws whenever he encounters a mind with a hard disposition and stays only where he finds one that is soft.[99]

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[99] Plato, *Symposium*, 195e.

Again, as we have observed from the start, love is separate from god and men. Although Agathon claims that love is a god, he describes love in such a way as to distinguish its nature from that of the gods. Love is constantly, yet implicitly, throughout the dialogue, being presented as being somehow in between god and man, despite the fact that each speaker explicitly claims that love is itself a god. Agathon perpetuates this inconsistency as well in that he claims that love is a god, yet he distinguishes love from divinity as well as humanity. He does this in his description of where it is that love resides. Love is neither in the physical human world, being non-corporeal itself, nor does love reside in the realm of the gods. Agathon is explicitly clear that love somehow resides in the minds of both men and gods. Love, by necessity, has to be both part of, yet separate from, the two realms which it is to unite. Agathon provides the context within which love performs its salvific function as rhetorically presented by those speakers before him. He also claims that there is a condition to love's being present within one's mind, be it that of a god or man. He is not particularly clear as to what he means by 'hard' and 'soft', yet suggests that the disposition of one in whose mind love is to reside must be of a certain character. One must prepare him/herself for love's presence. Again, the cultivation of love, as earlier described by Eryximachus, must be worked toward.

Agathon, as do Phaedrus, Eryximachus, and Aristophanes, presents love as that power which brings about virtuous conduct. Like these other speakers, Agathon favours a particular virtue in his description of this power: temperance. Agathon not only places love in relation to temperance, but he almost identifies each with the other. He says,

> We all agree that temperance is a control of pleasures and desires, while no pleasure is stronger than Love: if they are the weaker, they must be under Love's control, and he is their controller; so that Love, by controlling pleasures and desires, must be eminently temperate.[100]

The relation between love and temperance here is a little different from love's relations to the other virtues as they have been presented by the previous speakers. The previous speakers claim that love brings about courage and piety, inspiring the lover to virtuous action. Here, however, Agathon claims that love itself is temperate. The previous speakers have not explicitly said that love is courageous or pious, for love has no knowledge of these virtues. Temperance, however, is a little different, for it is itself, like love, in between reason and passion. Temperance, for Plato, occurs when reason, through the exercise of the will, controls the passions. Temperance is a mean: one can indulge in certain things, but

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[100] *Ibid.*, 196c.

not to excess, recalling the point Eryximachus made "... we set high importance on a right use of the appetite for dainties of the table, that we may cull the pleasure without disease."[101] Love, like temperance, involves the correct attractions to the correct objects.

Agathon, like Aristophanes, says that love "... makes himself our leader."[102] He describes love as "... our trustiest helmsman, boatswain, champion, deliverer; ... leader fair and best, whom everyone should follow ..."[103] This crucial aspect of love, as a dynamic mediator through which humanity attains salvation, is developed to its completion in the speech of Socrates.

Love has been rhetorically and developmentally shown by our first four speakers to be a universal principle of attraction, providing true opinion of virtue, explicitly courage in Phaedrus, piety in Eryximachus and Aristophanes, and temperance in Agathon. Love also gives us the ability to act on this true opinion of virtue; i.e., while at this point it is implicit that love is not a virtue itself, it is now explicitly the dynamic through which virtue is realized. This principle exists somehow in between humanity and divinity, bringing each toward the other.

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[101] *Ibid.*, 187e.
[102] *Ibid.*, 197d.
[103] *Ibid.*, 197e.

(Remember that according to Aristophanes, the gods need man as much as man needs the gods. Although the point might be valid, it is rhetorically made.)[104] Furthermore, love has been seen to be a longing for things that can be either helpful or detrimental. It has been rhetorically stated that the proper objects of love are eternal things such as virtue and the soul. Universally and dialectically, the object of desire will become the good in Socrates' speech. Furthermore, love is a longing for completion. Love has come about as a consequence of human impiety and is needed for that impiety to be rectified. It is a guide that leads us to completion and salvation. Love has been said to be a great god, but a god who acts on behalf of humanity. It has been stated by each speaker that love is a god, but this claim has been presupposed. Throughout their descriptions of love, however, love is seen to be separate from the gods, in between humanity and divinity, thus creating a tension between what is explicitly said and what is rhetorically implied. None of the speakers focuses on love's godhood as his topic, but rather, each rhetorically examines the nature of love and what it does. Furthermore, we have seen love presented in two different ways. In one sense, love is an emotion; the longing expressed by Aristophanes is a predialectical description of what will explicitly become desire in the speech of Diotima. In the second

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[104] *Ibid.*, 190c.

sense, love is presented as a conscious being, rhetorically identified as a god up to this point, who is capable of anagogical action. These two sides of love, Eros the god and eros the emotion will be united by Diotima in the notion of the spirit or *δαίμων*. All of this has been stated rhetorically. We shall now see these rhetorical truths established dialectically in the speech of Socrates. Essentially, these elements will remain, though given dialectical form and ground.

CHAPTER 2 — LOVE IS GROUNDED

2.1 SOCRATES AND AGATHON

Love has been presented to us by the first five speakers. The speech of Socrates, which aside from his questioning of Agathon is mainly an account of a number of past discussions with Diotima, will now dialectically ground love. We will see, however, that Diotima not only uses Socrates' dialectical method of question and answer, but also uses rhetoric to describe the nature and function of love. These switches from dialectic to rhetoric and back again are easily identified in the text and perhaps represent the union of dialectic and rhetoric in language, despite their differences, as noted in the Introduction. Perhaps this also allows Plato some rhetorical room to describe this difficult and complex doctrine by placing it in the mouth of Diotima rather than Socrates. On the most fundamental level, neither dialectic nor rhetoric is completely separable from the other for they are both united in language. In any case, it is understandable that this discourse on love, which is forever "in between" a number of opposite poles, be given in a manner which is itself "in between." Let us now see how the grounding of this doctrine of love unfolds.

Socrates, in the prelude to his narration of the discourse between himself and Diotima, begins by asking some questions of Agathon. The significance of this exchange is that first, Socrates dialectically defeats in short order, the claim that love is a god, and secondly, he sets the stage for the dialectical method which now explicitly takes hold. The exchange is a response to Agathon's speech, which we have just heard; yet the claim Socrates corrects, i.e., that love is a god, has been made by all of the previous speakers. This correction, i.e., that love is not in fact a god, however, is not the 'death blow' to the previous speeches, as some scholars think. As I have argued, this claim that love is a god, while made by each speaker, is the explicit subject of none of the speeches since the notion of definition had not arisen until the speech of Agathon which then proceeded to ignore it. In fact, none of the speakers so far have dealt with the claim in any detail at all. It is presupposed by each speaker and made almost in passing by each of them. The dialectical conclusion that love is not a god does little, if anything, to shake the groundwork that has been established so far. Furthermore, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Agathon introduces the notion of definition, and in this way, sets the stage for Socrates' dialectical argument regarding the nature of love. Socrates will arrive at both the *essence* of love, from which its properties are derived, and the true nature of its object. Although the consensus in the scholarship is that this prelude is

"straightforward", it does make these essential advances in the moving dialectic.[105] Let us now look at the argument in detail.

Socrates asks Agathon whether or not it is necessary to love's nature that love be love *of* something, i.e., whether or not it must have an object. Like the notions of father and mother, the notion of love, by necessity, analytically entails an accompanying object. A father, by necessity, is a father of a son or daughter, without at least one of which, the notion of 'father' is nonsensical. So too must love, Agathon agrees, be love *of something*; i.e., love is relational. (We shall soon see the beginning of the development of what this something is.) Furthermore, love "... desires the particular thing that is his object."[106] Love, in this dialectical context, is now explicitly desire, whereby according to necessity the lover is related to his/her object through the dynamic of desire, the general form of which is the desire to *possess* something. This notion of possession has not been central to the focus of any of the speeches so far, save that of Aristophanes who mentions the desire to possess completion, which entails the 'possession' of the other half, so to speak. This notion of possession develops throughout Socrates' speech however; hence it does certainly remain in the picture.

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[105] See Cobb, p. 70.
[106] Plato, *Symposium*, 200a.

Socrates elaborates on this relation making the claim that, "... as a necessity ... the desiring subject must have a desire for something it lacks, and again, no desire if it has no lack."[107] The tall man, he says, does not desire to be tall nor does the strong man desire to be strong, for each already possesses the characteristic desired. To such people who claim to desire that which they already possess, Socrates says, "When you say – *I desire these present things* – we suggest you are merely saying – *I wish these things now present to be present also in the future.*"[108] Only in this way, Socrates claims, can one desire, and therefore love, that which is already present. Socrates summarizes what has been established so far:

> ... all who feel desire, feel it for what is not provided or present; for something they have not or are not or lack; and that sort of thing is the object of desire and love.[109]

We now have the conditions, established dialectically, whereby a thing can rightfully be an object of desire and love. Desire is a consequence of a lack or deficiency, whereby the subject desires or loves that which is not present. Aristophanes' speech is brought to mind here in that he too presents love as a desire brought about by a deficiency. Socrates, however, dialectically grounds the point Aristophanes made rhetorically

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[107] *Ibid.*, 200b.
[108] *Ibid.*, 200d.
[109] *Ibid.*, 200e.

in his speech by eliciting love's relation to a desired object. The object of desire is that which the lover lacks, the possession of which gives rise to his/her completion. We have yet to see dialectically what the object of desire and the completion attained are explicitly; yet we now have the conditions in place.

Socrates agrees with Agathon, however, that love is always love of the beautiful, never of the ugly. Agathon has said in his speech,

> Hence also those dealings of the gods were contrived by Love – clearly love of beauty – astir in them, for Love has no concern with ugliness.[110]

We must give Agathon credit in that even in his rhetorical speech, beauty is not confined to the body. As we have seen, Agathon speaks of the soul and mind, each of which must have the proper disposition for love to take up residence. For Agathon, beauty is not merely physical. Socrates agrees that love is always of the beautiful saying, "... the gods contrived the world from a love of beautiful things, for of the ugly there was no love."[111] He then says, according to what has been dialectically established so far concerning the conditions of the object of love, that if love is only of the beautiful, and the object of desire must be lacking in the desiring subject, then it follows that love does not possess the

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[110] *Ibid.*, 197b.
[111] *Ibid.*, 201a.

beautiful. Furthermore, if beautiful things are good things (and implicitly one cannot be one without the other), then love does not possess the good. That which lacks beauty cannot be beautiful, and that which lacks the good cannot be good.

Socrates' argument here can get a little confusing. The way in which these matters are put raises the problem of the self-predication of love, i.e., there is a logical tension each time Socrates says that 'love loves'. Remember that love is being spoken and thought of on two levels. First, we have 'Love, the god', the notion of which has been dialectically defeated. However, this aspect of love as a kind of being, though no longer a god, is maintained and is still present. Love still has this aspect of some sort of being. This first level is maintained by Diotima in her speaking of love as a spirit, as we shall see. Whatever love is, he/she/it loves, i.e., desires, beautiful and good things. Secondly, we have 'desiring love', spoken of as an emotion. Seen in this way, whoever or whatever 'Love the being' is, this being loves/desires beautiful things. Love has been presented from the start, though not explicitly, as having a kind of dual being. The idea of 'Love, the god' entails what love is, while that of 'love, the desire' entails what love does. Thus, if we keep these two aspects of love in mind, there should be no logical problem in saying that 'Love loves', even if what is meant by this is not exactly clear.

To put both aspects together, we might say that love is a relational being, i.e., what will dialectically come to be spirit. Furthermore, whatever is established concerning Love's loving, the same is also true of the love of any finite being or thing, e.g., when it is said that Love loves only the beautiful, so too does man love only the beautiful.

Many scholars have noted a problem with Socrates' argument that love is not beautiful.[112] Remember that he has set up the condition that one cannot desire that which he/she already possesses (the tall man cannot desire to be tall nor the strong man desire to be strong), unless what is meant by this is that he/she desires to keep on possessing the present object into the future, i.e., he/she desires for something not yet present – future possession. Perhaps then, Agathon should not agree so readily with Socrates that love must not be beautiful. Certainly Love loves the beautiful; yet according to Socrates' condition, this need not imply that love itself is not beautiful. Perhaps love, like the tall man and the strong man, is in fact beautiful, yet loves beauty in that it desires to possess beauty into the future. The problem, then, is that according to this condition, it is not by *necessity* that love is not beautiful. Furthermore, there is the further theological problem that if the gods love the beautiful, then they too must either lack beauty or fear losing it in

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[112] E.g., Bloom, p. 499; Cobb, pp. 70-1; Rosen, pp. 220-1.

the future; wherefore they cannot be eternal and unchanging. Plato seems to overlook this theological complication. While we should not merely overlook this problem, perhaps we can 'cut Plato some slack' if we further examine what he is trying to do here.

Bloom criticizes this exchange between Socrates and Agathon on two grounds. First, he seems to think that the exchange is superficially simplistic; and secondly, he has a problem with this theological tension that many readers of the *Symposium* have noted. He writes,

> This superficial, although useful, conversation with Agathon points to the depths but passes over them and continues with the gentle Agathon acquiescing to Socrates' argument that Eros cannot be beautiful.[113]

Bloom says that the implication that the gods, like love, must lack beauty "... is an important theological point, not emphasized by Socrates here, but absolutely essential to his thought."[114] The exchange, for reasons I have explained above, is hardly superficial. However, I think that Plato's/Socrates' overlooking of this exception that one can desire what one possesses, provided that what he/she really means by this desire is to keep on possessing it, points to what Plato himself is trying to emphasize. What this argument serves is the fact that love, since it is not beautiful, is something separate from the gods. Again, Plato shows us

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[113] Bloom, p. 499.
[114] *Ibid.*

that love is somewhere in between humanity and divinity, its mediation being a heretofore implicit dialectical trend continuing throughout the dialogue since the speech of Phaedrus. Thus, I agree with Bloom insofar as Plato overlooks this theological difficulty, but I think he overlooks this point to make a greater one, one by which we should not be surprised at this point, namely that love is in between humanity and divinity. That Plato is emphasizing this point here is further supported by what is to come; for what follows is Socrates' account of his discussions with Diotima wherein love is dialectically shown to be a spirit or mediation between man and divinity.

Socrates ends his questioning of Agathon with a beautifully humble distinction between himself and the moving objective dialectic, which, not incidentally, has been implicitly progressing throughout the dialogue. Socrates, having concluded "... if Love lacks beautiful things, and good things are beautiful, he must lack good things too", Agathon responds, "I see no means, Socrates, of contradicting you ... let it be as you say."[115] Socrates replies, "No, it is Truth, my loveable Agathon, whom you cannot contradict: Socrates you easily may."[116] Socrates has raised the standard of what the proper method of investigation should be; the truth of anything that has been and will be said of love is independent of

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[115] Plato, *Symposium*, 201c.
[116] *Ibid.*

the speaker; thus again is stressed the importance of the contributions of all the speakers in the *Symposium*. The dialectic is independent, and therefore, dialectical ground is made even when the speaker is unaware of it. (Pausanias' speech is a good example of this, for reasons I have discussed). Socrates has opened his questioning of Agathon by stating his dissatisfaction with the way in which the speeches were made. Socrates says,

> ...I was ignorant of the method in which eulogies ought to be made ... [f]or I was such a silly wretch as to think that one ought in each case to speak the truth about the person eulogized ... But now, it appears that this is not what is meant by a good speech of praise: which is rather an ascription of all the highest and fairest qualities, whether the case be so or not: it is really no matter if they are untrue.[117]

Having shown us the proper method of reasoning one must use when investigating the nature of a thing, Socrates will now " ...speak the mere truth in [his] own way ..."[118] Socrates tells us the method he will use, and accordingly, I shall divide this chapter into two parts, following Socrates' division. He says, "So first, Agathon, I must unfold, in your manner of exposition, who and what sort of being is Love, and then I shall tell of his works."[119] Thus, Socrates himself recognizes his pre-dialectical debt to Agathon who first raised the notion of definition. These next two sections,

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[117] *Ibid.*, 198d-e.
[118] *Ibid.*, 199b.
[119] *Ibid.*, 201e.

however, often overlap, thus reflecting the way in which Diotima's discussion of the nature and function of love, which Socrates will relate to us, intertwines them both.

2. 2 SOCRATES AND DIOTIMA (What Love Is)

One of the main threads of consistency throughout the whole dialectic so far is that love's nature is such that it resides between two extremes. Love has been presented by the first five speakers as being between virtue and vice, life and death, ignorance and knowledge, and mortality and immortality. Phaedrus has presented love as being the dynamic through which virtue is realized, explicitly in relation to courage. The lover acts courageously, yet does not express as known that particular virtue; he has true opinion of courage. Eryximachus and Aristophanes place love between impiety and piety, elevating love to the status of that which provides humanity with salvation. When he first spoke with Diotima, Socrates thought, as did the other speakers, that love was a god, both beautiful and good. Upon hearing Diotima's arguments, i.e., those which he presented to Agathon above, Socrates thought then that love must be ugly and bad. We should not be surprised at this point, if we have taken the first speakers seriously enough, that Diotima proposes that there is something between these two poles as well. She asks Socrates,

> ... do you imagine that whatever is not beautiful must needs be ugly ... and what is not skilled, ignorant? Have you not observed that there is something halfway between skill and ignorance?[120]

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[120] *Ibid.*, 201e-202a.

This is where Diotima raises explicitly the notion of true opinion and its relation to love. As we have seen, this notion has been present implicitly from the start with the speech of Phaedrus. Not only is love *like* true opinion in that both are between two poles, but much more importantly, love has an intrinsic relation to true opinion in that love seems to cultivate it in the lover, thus moving him/her to virtuous action, accordingly. To repeat what Phaedrus says, the lover, as we have seen, indeed acts courageously; the act of the lover is the same as that of the innately courageous person. Yet, a distinction between the two must be made. The lover does not act out of a knowledge of courage; thus he cannot be said to possess courage. However, his act is the same as the innately courageous person's act, and thus he cannot be said to be ignorant of the virtue. Diotima now makes the needed distinction between them dialectically clear for us:

> You know, of course, that to have correct opinion, if you can give no reason for it, is neither full knowledge – how can an unreasoned thing be knowledge? – nor yet ignorance; for what hits on the truth cannot be ignorance. So correct opinion, I take it, is just in that position, between understanding and ignorance.[121]

We now have the distinction between the one who knows and the one with true opinion in the context of the *Symposium*. We have already

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[121] *Ibid.*, 202a.

noted the distinction between knowledge and true opinion in the *Meno* in Chapter 1; and here, we see Diotima taking the same position that Socrates takes in the *Meno*. Drawing the analogy between love and true opinion, Diotima teaches,

> Likewise with Love, when you find yourself admitting that he is not good or beautiful, do not therefore suppose that he must be ugly and bad, but something betwixt the two.[122]

Love is now dialectically grounded as an intermediate being according to the argument that desire/love analytically entails a lack or deficiency, yet not so complete a lack as to not be capable of good action. The notion of true opinion answers the question implicitly raised by Phaedrus: exactly how does love enable the lover to act courageously if he/she is not innately courageous? Love provides true opinion of the virtue, which, as Socrates says in the *Meno*, is as good a guide and leader as is knowledge. This notion of love as a leader was also raised by Aristophanes who said,

> ... we ought all to exhort others to a pious observance of the gods in all things, so that we may escape harm and attain to bliss under the gallant leadership of Love. Let none in act oppose him – and it is opposing him to incur the hate of heaven.[123]

Note how Aristophanes emphasizes that no one should oppose love "in act", again focusing on the importance of proper conduct specifically in

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[122] *Ibid.*, 202b.
[123] *Ibid.*, 193a-b.

relation to piety, another notion which makes dialectical ground in Socrates' speech as we shall see. We now have the function of love in the dialectical context according to which its role as a leader, leading one to virtuous conduct, can be properly understood.

Not only is love an intermediary between the beautiful and the ugly, and the good and the bad, as Diotima has just argued, but further, it is an intermediary between humanity and divinity. Looking over the theological tension mentioned above, Diotima argues that because love lacks the beautiful and the good, love cannot be a god, for she and Socrates agree that "... all gods are happy and beautiful."[124] Socrates fails to understand from what has gone before what love is if not a god. Just as he thought love must be ugly if not beautiful, he supposes love to be mortal if not divine. Diotima again says that love is "... between a mortal and an immortal."[125] Phaedrus was the first to place love between these two poles, whereby love causes one to sacrifice his/her own life only to receive immortality because of that selfless action. Here, in Diotima's speech, love dwells dialectically between immortality and mortality on two levels: first, love's nature is such that it is neither a god nor a mortal, and secondly (and perhaps as a result), as we have been told by Agathon, love resides or dwells between the two. Diotima brings

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[124] *Ibid.*, 202c.
[125] *Ibid.*, 202e.

these notions of love together in the one idea, claiming that love is "a great spirit ... for the whole of the spiritual is between divine and mortal."[126] We often use the word 'spirit' to denote an emotional drive or resolution, i.e., to efforts that are encompassed by, or at least related to, the idea of emotional desire. Thus, 'Love the being' and 'love the emotion' are both united in the notion of spirit.

At Socrates' request, Diotima continues to explain the "power" that love has as a "great spirit". She claims that love has the status of a messenger between humanity and divinity. Love bridges the gap between men and the gods, thus allowing for communion between them. Diotima says,

> God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep.[127]

Note that the gap requires a bridge for each to reach the other; the divine needs communion with humanity just as much as humanity needs communion with the divine. This reminds us of Aristophanes' rhetorical claim that the gods need "... the honours and observances they [have] from men."[128] A dialectical argument stating why the gods need men is

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[126] *Ibid.* Lamb tells us on p. 179 n. 1, "*Δαιμονες* [sic] ["spirits"] and *το δαιμονιον* [sic] [literally, "a thing having to do with a spirit", or "a spiritual thing"] represent the mysterious agencies and influences by which the gods communicate with mortals."
[127] *Ibid.*, 203a.
[128] *Ibid.*, 190c.

not explicit in the *Symposium*. Perhaps further examination of Socrates' conduct with Alcibiades will shed light on this matter, for the question of what it is that the gods could obtain from men is akin to the question of what the lover, i.e., the possessor of wisdom, obtains from his exchange with the beloved. In such an inquiry we must remember that selflessness figures prominently in the conduct of the lover. We shall examine this more fully in Chapter 3.

Returning to love's function, although Diotima makes great dialectical advancement in her exchange with Socrates, she is often rhetorical herself in describing the function of love, which she describes as,

> Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above; being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined into one.[129]

Again, we have the implicit claim that the gods do indeed lack something. Perhaps this is not so much an oversight on Plato's part as the scholarship claims. Perhaps the gods *are* lacking and require something from men. We must remember that Diotima's speech is a combination of dialectic and rhetoric. We do have some questioning and answering, the method Socrates applies in the other dialogues; however, there are

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[129] *Ibid.*, 202e-203a.

lengthy sections of somewhat rhetorical discourse. In a sense, the style fits well with that of the rest of the *Symposium*, and putting these words into the mouth of Diotima rather than Socrates himself seems to allow Plato to use a more rhetorical air in his description of love's nature and function. However, the style of Diotima is much more dialectical that that of the speakers before Socrates, in that she employs the method of 'question and answer' with regard to the nature and function of love, thus gaining ground in *defining* the subject. In Socrates' speech the reader is often unaware how rhetoric passes into dialectic and dialectic into rhetoric. If we took Mitchell's claim, quoted at the beginning of Chapter 1, seriously, then there should be nothing new in Diotima's speech. Yet, the speech of Diotima dialectically grounds that which has already gone before, and in this it is profoundly original.

What we have here dialectically in Diotima's description of the function of love as a spirit, is the claim that love binds together what are separate, thus giving rise to a kind of completion, i.e., "... that the whole is combined into one."[130] Again, we should not be surprised if these notions sound familiar. This claim that love binds humanity and divinity reminds us of Aristophanes' claim that love is the desire for completion. We are also reminded of Eryximachus who cited the importance of the

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[130] *Ibid.*

task of the diviner who cultivates the love between god and men, and thus, functions like the messenger to whom Diotima likens love. Furthermore, Eryximachus explicitly raised the notions of piety and divination, and in fact, he was more explicit, (yet more rhetorical in that love's nature had yet to be dialectically defined) than Diotima in his discussion of piety in relation to the communion that love brings about.

Diotima seems to restrict matters of communion between men and the gods, i.e., spirituality, exclusively to the diviner. Other matters she groups together, and implies that they are inferior. She says, "Through [love's power] are conveyed all divination and priestcraft concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery."[131] Diotima continues, "Skill in this area is what makes a person spiritual, whereas skill in any other art or craft ties a person to the material world."[132] Love is the power through which salvation is attained, yet Diotima claims that only the priest or diviner can utilize this power. Eryximachus, however, tells us that the observance and cultivation of the proper love, which exists everywhere, is in fact piety itself. He focuses on the diviner as he who specifically deals with the attractions between men and the gods, but universalizes love's power, claiming that it exists everywhere. He has said, "Thus Love, conceived as a single whole, exerts

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[131] *Ibid.*, 202e-203a.
[132] *Ibid.*, 203a.

a wide, a strong, nay, in short, a complete power ..."[133] Thus, as I have argued in Chapter 1, wherever this love is cultivated, whether it is through the skill of the physician, the artist, as well as the priest, as long as it is the correct love giving rise to a proper, healthy state, humanity and divinity are brought together. Thus, any practitioner of any art or techne who performs his/her craft correctly achieves salvation through his/her own craft. Diotima says that any other craft besides that of the priest or diviner "ties" its practitioner to the material world. It is not clear exactly what she means by that, but it seems to imply that these other crafts not only fail to achieve communion with the gods, but further, actually distract their practitioners from attaining communion with them. Placed alongside divination, other skills are seen in a negative light. In this sense therefore, Eryximachus, while failing to define love, surpasses Diotima on this matter.

Love's nature as an intermediary, though present rhetorically since the beginning of the dialogue, now has achieved its dialectical context. Again, however, Diotima's speech takes a rhetorical turn. After providing us with the above dialectical arguments, she tells Socrates a rhetorical myth regarding the birth of love, again serving the purpose of showing how love is placed between mortality and divinity, want and abundance,

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[133] *Ibid.*, 188d.

ignorance and knowledge. Love, Diotima says, is the son of Resource and Poverty, and accordingly, has characteristics of both. Her description of love in this short myth rivals the rhetoric of all those before her. Because Love was conceived on the day of Aphrodite's birth, Diotima claims that he is "... by nature, a lover bent on beauty since Aphrodite is beautiful."[134] The dialectic has grounded what love is, but now, in this description of it, the dialectical method gets pushed to one side:

> By birth neither immortal nor mortal, in the selfsame day he is flourishing and alive at the hour when he is abounding in resource; at another he is dying, and then reviving again by the force of his father's nature: yet the resources that he gets will ever be ebbing away; so that Love is at no time either resourseless or wealthy, and furthermore, he stands midway betwixt wisdom and ignorance.[135]

Again, we have the claims that love is akin to true opinion, between wisdom and ignorance, and that it is neither mortal not immortal. Mitchell finds fault with this rhetorical myth of the birth of eros. He writes, "The root problem that stems from Eros' inheritance is that he must combine in one nature both the mortality of his human mother and the immortality of his divine father."[136] However, Diotima tries to understand love's nature taking into account both divine and mortal characteristics; we know from her dialectical arguments that love is in

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[134] *Ibid.*, 203c.
[135] *Ibid.*, 203e.
[136] Mitchell, p. 125.

between humanity and divinity. It is not a "problem" that love's nature is such; on the contrary, it is only because love's nature is in between humanity and divinity that his nature can combine both and that humanity can attain salvation. The function of the myth is to give some insight into the intermediate nature of love, not necessarily how it got that nature. It is a useful means to explain such difficult and complex notions despite its dialectical deficiency, namely that it employs analogies rather than reason to make the nature of a thing known.

Diotima's myth regarding the birth of love also gives us an account of the origin of the dynamic according to which it is possible for love to carry humanity toward divinity, i.e., love's power. In virtue of love's possession of true opinion, it is possible for love to recognize its ignorance, i.e., its lack of knowledge. Yet because it has not a complete deficiency, it is therefore able to undertake the move toward knowledge. The deficiency gives the movement purpose, yet the possession makes the dynamic inquiry possible. Because love is "... betwixt wisdom and ignorance", it can desire wisdom. Diotima claims,

> ... no gods ensue wisdom or desire to be made wise; such they are already; nor does anyone else that is wise ensue it. Neither do the ignorant ensue wisdom, nor desire to be made wise: in this very point is ignorance distressing, that a person who is not enlightened or intelligent should be satisfied with himself. The man who does

> not feel himself defective has no desire for that whereof he feels no defect.[137]

Accordingly, if neither the wise nor the ignorant pursue wisdom, then again, the only people who pursue it must be somewhere between wisdom and ignorance. True opinion emerges as the starting point of knowledge and wisdom. Socrates deals with this problem in the *Meno* in what is known as '*Meno's* paradox'. Socrates formulates the paradox in this way:

> ... a man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know ... He would not seek for what he knows, for since he knows it there is no need of the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for.[138]

Meno himself adds a second complication to the second part of the paradox as presented by Socrates. Even if one could begin the search for what one does not know, he could never find what it is he is looking for, for even if he came "right up against it", he would not be able to recognize it as the object of inquiry without somehow already knowing it. Socrates goes further in his formulation, in that one could not even *begin* such an inquiry without first in some sense knowing what it is that he wishes to find. The doctrine of anamnesis is examined in the *Meno* as a solution to the paradox, but its details cannot concern us here. In the

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[137] Plato, *Symposium*, 203e-204a.
[138] Plato, *Meno*, 80e.

Symposium, however, the notion of true opinion appears as a condition by which the search for wisdom might be begun. True opinion is the middle ground whereby there is both a lack which gives the inquiry purpose and a possession which makes the inquiry possible. One must be in this middle ground if he/she is to desire wisdom at all. Only the philosopher, i.e., the lover of wisdom, can desire wisdom. He/she is in this position of recognition of his/her own ignorance. Mitchell writes,

> Eros, then, is a philosopher. He is a lover of wisdom. He desires it. He does not have it. He must ceaselessly seek to get hold of what he already has, never either really having it or not having it. He is a daimon.[139]

Furthermore, it is the power of love which provides us with this true opinion, thus intimately uniting love to wisdom in an anagogical way. Diotima claims, "... Love must needs be a friend of wisdom ..."[140] We have help in the *Symposium* through the salvific power of love as it grants true opinion to humanity; whereas in the *Meno*, all knowledge is eternally possessed, yet must be recollected. Therefore, Plato proposes another solution to Meno's paradox in the *Symposium*. True opinion is the condition by which wisdom is desired; for neither the wise nor the ignorant desire wisdom; and this true opinion, as has been continually

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[139] Mitchell, p. 127.
[140] Plato, *Symposium*, 204b.

claimed since the speech of Phaedrus, is provided by love. Whereas Phaedrus presents this dynamic in relation to courage, and Eryximachus and Aristophanes present it in terms of piety, in the speech of Socrates, love is the dynamic which carries one toward wisdom. Wisdom is the most beautiful of things, according to Diotima, and love, as Agathon rhetorically told us, loves only the beautiful. It is the nature of love to be attracted to the beautiful, not only in body, but most importantly in mind/soul. There is no such analogous dynamic in the *Meno*, nor do we have one explicitly in the *Republic*. Love, as a spirit in the *Symposium*, is a kind of grace humanity is given, a helping hand which attracts us toward god and god toward us. We shall briefly examine the relation between the *Symposium* and the *Republic* later in the next section.

This notion that neither the wise nor the ignorant pursue wisdom confuses the relation between the traditional lover and the beloved, a relation which has been confused from the start. Diotima says that Socrates, like many others, believed the beloved to be more akin to love since he possesses physical beauty. He supposed that love must too be beautiful as the beloved is beautiful. However, according to Diotima's arguments, love is not beautiful; it is more akin to the lover who himself is not beautiful. The lover is an embodiment of love, acting as the mediator, insofar as he tries to attract the beloved toward virtue. Virtue is the loveable object, and is, as Diotima says, "... truly beautiful, tender,

perfect, and heaven-blest ..."[141] Like love itself, the lover does not possess this wisdom, but rather, he possesses true opinion of the beautiful and the good. Thus, the lover can desire wisdom insofar as he has both a possession and a lack as described above. This matter is taken up in Chapter 3 in the discussion of Alcibiades' speech where Socrates himself is seen as the embodiment of love. The lover tries to instill his own desire for wisdom in the beloved. Thus, although the lover has no wisdom to gain from the beloved, since the beloved does not possess wisdom, in the lover's cultivation and production of this proper love in the beloved, teaching him to desire virtue, the lover improves his own piety and that of the beloved. For as Eryximachus says, the gods love this love, and thus the production and cultivation of this love contributes to both the lover's and the beloved's salvation.

Now that Diotima has revealed to a certain extent the nature of love, she moves to explain, as a response to Socrates' question, "... what ... [do] we humans gain from [love]?", the true object of love and the progression of the soul toward that object. As I have said above, the discussions of love's nature and love's function overlap, and we have already discussed what love's nature is. Furthermore, the object of love itself seems to develop throughout Diotima's speech: love of wisdom

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[141] *Ibid.*, 204c.

moves to love of beauty to love of happiness to the love of immortality, all of which are encompassed in the ultimate universal desire – the love of the good.

2. 3 SOCRATES AND DIOTIMA (What Love Does)

The beginning of this second part of Diotima's speech shifts back to the dialectical method of question and answer, where Socrates plays the part of the interlocutor. First, she questions Socrates as to what desire is for on the most basic level, i.e., what desire in general analytically entails regardless of its particular object. Perhaps this is a basic or presupposed point, but an important one which has yet to be explicitly raised. When Diotima asks, "Can you tell me in what sense Love loves attractive things?, or more clearly, a lover loves attractive things – but why?", Socrates responds, "Because he wants them to be his."[142] Love again emerges explicitly as desire for *possession*, established here in a dialectical context. Whatever it is that one desires, he/she desires to possess it in some way. This, however, entails another question, namely: "What will a person gain if he gets these attractive things?"[143] When Socrates is unable to answer, Diotima asks the same question regarding good rather than beautiful things, moving from particular to universal. Socrates quickly answers that one who possesses good things will be happy. Happiness, Diotima claims, is an end in itself:

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[142] *Ibid.*, 204d.
[143] *Ibid.*

> ... [T]he happy are happy by acquisition of good things, and we have no more need to ask for what end a man wished to be happy, when such is his wish: the answer seems to be ultimate.[144]

This desire for happiness is universal. Everyone, as Socrates himself often claims, desires the good and thus desires to be happy. However, one can be mistaken as to what the good is, and thus might be mistaken as to what might make him/her happy, a point Socrates makes in the *Republic*. Regardless of whether one desires completion, a healthy bodily state, the cultivation of a student, or the satisfaction of self-sacrifice for another's happiness, the happiness of the lover seems to be the ultimate goal. I shall stress again that this is not a selfish motive, as one's happiness according to virtue necessarily entails the happiness of others. This idea develops further into the dialogue, however. Cobb says that "[t]his notion that love is basically a desire to *possess* beautiful things will later be rejected as an inadequate view."[145] Although Diotima's focus shifts from this desire as the object of love, as Socrates recounts in a number of different conversations at different times, the notion is not rejected. Rather, this notion that love is the desire to *possess x*, becomes subsumed under what surfaces as a universal desire for the good, as we shall see. Wisdom, beauty, and happiness, are all desired for their goodness. The good is the ultimate object of desire.

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[144] *Ibid.*, 205a.
[145] Cobb, p. 74.

Although there are lovers of many different things, be it money, music, wisdom, and so on, each lover considers the object of his/her desire to be good and thus expects to become happy by the acquisition of this object only insofar as it is good. Diotima claims, "Generically, indeed, [love] is all that desire of good things and of being happy."[146] She says that this desire for the good outweighs any other desire,

> [f]or men are prepared to have their own feet and hands cut off if they feel these belongings to be harmful. The fact is ... that each person does not cherish his belongings except where a man calls the good his own property and the bad another's; since what men love is simply and solely the good.[147]

Diotima makes an explicit reference to the speech of Aristophanes. She says, "... there runs a story ... that all who go seeking their other half are in love; though by my account love is neither for half nor for whole, unless, of course ... this happens to be something good."[148] Thus, the desire for another person is the same as the desire for anything else in that it is the good which is ultimately desired in each pursuit. Thus, Diotima universalizes the object of desire as the eternal good. Whatever one desires, he/she desires it because it is good. Thus, Diotima concludes that "... we may state unreservedly that men love the good."[149]

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[146] Symposium, 205c.
[147] *Ibid.*, 205e.
[148] *Ibid.*, 205e. Lamb refers to this passage as a "prophetic allusion to Aristophanes' speech", for Socrates is recalling a past conversation with Diotima (p. 189).
[149] *Ibid.*, 206a.

The object of desire now has its true dialectical form. It has moved beyond particular bodies and ideas such that the universal object of love is now the universal good, which has many different physical and metaphysical manifestations. However, to encompass within our definition of love those who desire to possess those now present things into the future, we must add the temporal aspect to this definition. For not only does one wish to possess the good for a certain amount of time, but he/she wishes to possess it forever. Thus, Diotima claims, "... love loves the good to be one's own forever."[150] Just as the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is necessary in the *Phaedo* for the theory of anamnesis, so too is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul necessary for the definition of love.

We might remember that eternal immutability had been introduced as an essential quality of the object of love by Pausanias. If love is to last, he says, then the object of that love must last as well. Thus, he contrasts the love of bodies, i.e., objects that change and pass away, with the love of eternal things such as virtue and the soul. Eternal objects, such as virtue and the soul, are the proper objects of love. Therefore, if the object of love is unchanging and eternal, then, and only then, is it possible for the love of that object to be eternal. The lover of an eternal object too,

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[150] *Ibid.*

Pausanias implies, becomes immortal insofar as the object of his/her love is immortal: "... the lover whose heart is touched by moral beauties is constant all his life, for he has become one with what will never fade."[151] If the lover becomes one with the object of love that never fades, so too should the lover him/herself never fade insofar as he/she becomes one with this eternal object. How, then, does one become one with the eternal object of desire and how does one go about attaining this end? The speakers previous to Diotima, especially Pausanias and Aristophanes, point to wholeness and completion as the end of love. This eternal holistic view takes a different form in Diotima's speech, where her view of eternity is an endless time, the form that her idea of human immortality takes. Diotima now turns to this question of how immortality is attained, for it is a necessary condition for the attainment of the true object of love.

Diotima proposes two ways in which immortality might be achieved. Not only is immortality presented as necessary if one is eternally to possess the good, but furthermore, immortality itself is essentially related to happiness, and thus, is itself an object of love providing happiness. Immortality, Diotima claims, is achieved by "... physical and mental procreation in an attractive medium."[152] This, she

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[151] *Ibid.*, 181a.
[152] *Ibid.*, 206b.

says, is "Love's purpose".[153] According to her rhetorical argument (this is not dialectically established, i.e., by rational discussion, yet is rhetorically derived from the dialectically grounded nature of love), both men and women are pregnant both in body and in soul and desire to produce offspring of each. Beauty is essential according to Diotima, for begetting occurs only between beautiful bodies and beautiful minds. One wonders, however, whether the beauty of body is required for progression of the soul and vice versa. Apparently, one is not required for the other, for while Socrates is always described as lacking physical beauty, his mind is beautifully superior to all those with whom he comes into contact.

Diotima says, explaining this dual pregnancy, "It is a divine affair, this engendering and bringing to birth, and immortal element in the creature that is mortal; and it cannot occur where there is incompatibility."[154] The beautiful is the eternal in humanity; all else both in body and in soul is in constant flux according to Diotima. The body grows old: skin, hair, nails, etc., are replaced; it is a wonder that one can call an eighty year old man the same person as the baby he once was, for it seems that nothing remains unchanged. Diotima claims that this is also true of the mind/soul for "... we find ... none of [one's] manners or

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[153] *Ibid.*
[154] *Ibid.*, 206c.

habits, his opinions, desires, pleasures, pains or fears, ever abiding the same in his particular self; some things grow in him, while others perish."[155] Knowledge too is forgotten, added to, or corrected. Thus Diotima concludes,

> Every mortal thing is preserved in this way; not by keeping it exactly the same forever, like the divine, but by replacing what goes off or is antiquated with something fresh, in the semblance of the original.[156]

Immortality can be achieved only through this mechanism of replacement. "... [T]he mortal nature ever seeks, as best it can, to be immortal. In one way only can it succeed, and that is by generation; since so it can always leave behind it a new creature [be it physical or spiritual] in place of the old."[157] Only in this way, says Diotima, can a mortal partake of immortality both in body and in soul. She will, however, propose another way in which a greater immortality might be attained later in the speech.

Diotima now takes back what she said earlier of love, i.e., that love loves the beautiful. She explicitly tells Socrates that he is wrong in supposing that love is of the beautiful (an odd thing for her to say in as much as she herself maintained this in her argument up to this point). If

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[155] *Ibid.*, 207e.
[156] *Ibid.*, 208b.
[157] *Ibid.*, 207c-d.

love is not of the beautiful, then there is no reason to say that love is not itself beautiful; for the conclusion that love itself is not beautiful was based on the idea that love desires only that which it lacks. If love no longer loves the beautiful, then perhaps it is beautiful itself. Diotima thus proposes a new definition of the object of love, i.e., "... engendering and begetting upon the beautiful."[158] Ultimately, however, love desires immortality, and thus this desire for begetting upon the beautiful both in body and in soul seems to serve only this purpose. Both Love the spirit and humanity lack immortality and thus they both love it. Although Socrates seems to be recounting a number of separate conversations he has had with Diotima, ultimately these conversations unite in that the love of the beautiful is being transformed into love of immortality as a necessary condition for achieving what has already been given as the ultimate object of love – the good. In her presentation, the good is the ultimate object of desire, for it is the good, no matter what its manifestation, that provides happiness. Whether it be the desire for the beautiful or the desire for immortality, the desire for the good is behind each of these. The good supplants the beautiful and grounds it. It seems that the focus is on immortality here because Diotima is explaining how we might attain the good, according to which, immortality is necessary.

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[158] *Ibid.*, 206e.

The way in which humanity can achieve immortality, and the immortality it achieves, are both different from those of the divine. Human beings replace their bodies and souls throughout life, whereas the divine body and soul are complete. We are reminded of Aristophanes' claim that love desires completion, for both Diotima and Aristophanes present the notion of generation or procreation as ways in which human beings come together and achieve the completion that is possible for mortals. Each speaker implies that this form of immortality is deficient or lacking. Divine completion is not achieved through generation, for its completion is eternally constant, whereas the mortal continues through endless time, constantly changing throughout. The divine is eternally unchanging and complete, whereas the mortal is sempiternal and mutable and always incomplete. Without immortality, the ultimate object of desire cannot be attained. For not only does love love the good to be its own, but further, it loves the good to be its own forever. Thus, immortality is necessary, but not sufficient, for the attainment of love's ultimate end, i.e., the eternal possession of the good. Diotima says,

> From what has been admitted, we needs must yearn for immortality no less than for good, since love loves good to be one's own forever. And hence it necessarily follows that love is of immortality.[159]

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[159] *Ibid.*, 207a.

Diotima takes another step back from the previous speeches, again, thus suggesting that the reader should be critical in accepting what Diotima, as one who uses rhetoric, says. I have argued in Chapter 1, against Rosen, that one of the great achievements of Phaedrus' speech, through his use of examples, is to tie selflessness to love. Diotima, however, subverts these examples in an attempt to strengthen her claim that all people are obsessed with achieving fame for all time. Indeed this is another way in which immortality might be attained by mortals; yet it is an inferior type of immortality. Like honour, fame is always externally dependant, requiring others to bestow it upon one. Diotima degrades the ultimate actions of self-sacrifice performed by Alcestis and Achilles. She asks Socrates,

> Do you suppose ... that Alcestis would have died for Admetus, or Achilles have sought death on the corpse of Patroclus ... if they had not expected to win 'a deathless memory for valour' which now we keep? Of course not. I hold it is for immortal distinction and for such illustrious renown as this that they all do all they can, and so much the more in proportion to their excellence.[160]

Holding that one never acts selflessly seems to be a pessimistic outlook on the nature of the human condition. It is a step back from Phaedrus to

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[160] *Ibid.*, 208e.

think that one always has an ulterior motive of self-gain, without which no one would act on behalf of anyone. Certainly Phaedrus does not present the actions of these figures in such a light, which is cynical regardless of whether or not "they are in love with what is immortal."[161]

Getting back to this notion of the begetting of the body and soul, Diotima says that the begetting of the soul is of a higher quality than that of the body. Plato's mind/body dualism, as we have seen, continues into this doctrine of love too, as it does into much of his other work (yet we note the tension where present). The soul is given pride of place over the body, and thus the begotten of the soul is greater, or more divine, than the begotten of the body. This dualism is not explicitly overcome in Plato, and although there are implicit notions of equality of body and soul in this and some of his other works, e.g., the *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo*, explicitly, the body is a corruptible prison which must be overcome by the soul. Perhaps this is why the idealized lover/beloved relationship is more often than not explicitly favoured over heterosexual relationships in the dialogue. The mind/body dualism keeps hanging on, rendering

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[161] *Ibid.*, 208e. This retreat from what has gone before, and other retreats like it, are all the more reason to take the speeches of the *Symposium* as a whole. If indeed the speech of Socrates were the culmination of the dialogue, independent of the other speeches, why would one even bother to read the other speeches for philosophical purposes? As we can see from this example wherein Diotima retreats from Phaedrus' earlier advancement, if we take Socrates' speech in isolation, we would not get as full and complete a definition of love as we do if we read the dialogue the way it is supposed to be read, i.e., as a continuity. Although Diotima's arguments ground that which has gone before them, each speech makes its own contributions, without all of which the *Symposium* would be incomplete.

relationships based solely on the soul greater than those that have physical elements, when there is no real dialectical reason for one to be greater than the other. We saw this in Aristophanes' speech where dialectically, if anything, the heterosexual relationship should be favoured in that it begets children; yet Aristophanes favours the traditional lover/beloved relationship almost by default. Furthermore, while Diotima will favour the traditional male lover/beloved relationship to heterosexual relationships, it is ironic that the possibility that females too might beget children of the soul is not raised in as much as Diotima, a female, is the one who knows about love. From a universal standpoint, a flaw of the dialogue is that it fails to incorporate explicitly what is said of this traditional male relationship concerning love into relationships involving females, both heterosexual and homosexual. Thus, the places where such equality is implicit are important, e.g., Eryximachus' claim that love has a universal and complete power over all things. Let us now look at what Diotima says about these two types of begetting.

As for those who are pregnant of body, "... by begetting children they acquire a kind of immortality, a memorial, a state of bliss, which in their imagining they 'for all succeeding time procure.' "[162]

> Those who are mentally pregnant, however ... I mean, there are people whose minds are far more pregnant than their bodies;

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[162] *Ibid.*

> they're filled with the offspring you might expect a mind to bear and produce ... [, i.e.,] [v]irtue, and especially wisdom.[163]

The anagogical ascent is an ascent of the soul, exclusive of the body. It is the soul that is saved, not the body. The teacher of virtue is required to give birth to the dialectical children of the soul. These children are given pride of place over the children of the body in that they are 'more' immortal, so to speak. In fact, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates refers to himself as a midwife who helps men deliver ideas, yet cannot himself give birth, for like love, he lacks wisdom.[164] Diotima says that lovers who mingle psychically

> ... enjoy a far fuller community with each other than that which comes with children, and a far surer friendship, since these children of their union are fairer and more deathless. Everyone would choose to have children such as these rather than the human sort ...[165]

Another translation interprets,

> ... and so the bond between them will be more binding, and their communion even more complete, than that which comes of

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[163] *Ibid.*, 208e-209a.

[164] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 149-151. "My art of midwifery is in general like theirs; the only difference is that my patients are men, not women, and my concern is not with the body but with the soul that is in travail of birth. And the highest point of my art is the power to prove by every test whether the offspring of a young man's thought is a false phantom or instinct with life and truth. I am so far like the midwife that I cannot myself give birth to wisdom, and the common reproach is true, that, though I question others, I can myself bring nothing to light because there is not wisdom in me." (150b-c).

[165] *Ibid.*, 209c-d.

> bringing children up, because they have created something lovelier and less mortal than human seed.[166]

The procreation earlier discussed by Aristophanes here takes on new meaning. Aristophanes mentions physical "... conception and continuation of their [physical] kind ...", thus anticipating this notion of succession giving rise to the kind of immortality now made explicit by Diotima. Diotima introduces this new dialectical notion of psychical conception and continuation, which gives rise to a higher immortality. This notion of immortality is immensely difficult to grasp, as Diotima warns, yet she proceeds with the teaching.

Diotima presents this anagogical progression of the soul in the image of the ladder, each rung of which represents a movement toward the idea of the beautiful. Diotima's ladder is akin to Socrates' line and cave analogies in the *Republic*. Although we shall look briefly at these below, I must note here that Diotima has presented the good as the universal object of desire, and it is the good that resides at the top of the line and outside of the cave. Diotima, however, particularizes her image of the ladder in terms of beauty. The relationship between love and beauty is unclear in Plato. In the *Philebus*, he presents the good in a

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[166] Plato, "Symposium." Plato: the Collected Dialogues Including the Letters. Trans. R. Hackforth. Eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1989), 209 c-d. (The previous quotation is from Lamb's translation.) Socrates says more about the dialectical seed in the *Phaedrus* 276e-277a. We shall examine this passage in relation to the education of the beloved in Chapter 3.

trinitarian structure, of which beauty is a member.[167] The details need not concern us here beyond the fact that the ladder is particularized in terms of beauty; yet we know, as Diotima has explicitly told us, that the good is the ultimate object of desire.

The progression of the soul, particularized as the progression of the mind toward the idea of the beautiful, begins with the love of one particular, physically beautiful body. As with Plato's line analogy, we begin with the particular physical manifestation, i.e., an image of beauty. Again, as with Plato's line, we move from the particular to the universal, and here with Diotima's ladder, the universalization first takes place within the physical. Diotima says,

> ... next he must remark how the beauty attached to this or that is cognate to that which is attached to any other, and that if he means to ensue beauty in its form, it is gross folly not to regard as one and the same the beauty belonging to all ...[168]

The notion of the "form" of beauty is mentioned here. The student begins to realize that it is the same beauty which makes all beautiful objects beautiful. After this point, the main division of the line is crossed in that from here, the "... next advance will be to set a higher value on the beauty of souls than on that of the body ..."[169] Here, we are reminded of

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[167] "Then if we cannot hunt down the good under a single form, let us secure it by the conjunction of three, beauty, proportion, and truth, ..." Plato, *Philebus*, 65.
[168] Plato, *Symposium*, 210b.
[169] *Ibid.*

Pausanias who achieved this level of progression himself, emphasizing the soul as the proper object of love. The student, like the prisoner emerging from the cave, moves beyond the physical world. The next step is the universalization of beauty in the metaphysical realm concerning the love of beautiful "observances and laws", perhaps akin to mathematics on the line. From there he moves to certain branches of knowledge, which more than likely are knowledge of the virtues[170] From this point, the soul reaches the highest vision of the idea of beauty itself.

Diotima describes the form of beauty in language quite similar to that which Socrates uses to describe the forms in the *Phaedo.*[171]

> First of all, it is ever-existent and neither comes to be nor perishes, neither waxes nor wanes; next, it is not beautiful in part and in part ugly, nor is it such at such a time and other at another, nor in one respect beautiful and in another ugly, nor so affected by position as to seem beautiful to some and ugly to others ... existing ever in singularity of form independent by itself, while all the multitude of beautiful things partake of it in such wise that, though all of them are coming to be and perishing, it grows neither greater nor less, and is affected by nothing.[172]

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[170] *Ibid.*, 210c.

[171] Plato, *Phaedo*, 78c-79a. "'Does that absolute reality which we define in our discussions remain always constant and invariable or not? Does absolute equality or beauty or any other independent entity which really exists ever admit change of any kind? Or does each one of these uniform and independent entities remain always constant and invariable, never admitting any alteration in any respect or in any sense?' – 'They must be constant and invariable, Socrates, said Cebes.'" (78c-d)

[172] *Symposium*, 211a-b.

It is interesting to note that the *via negitiva* in which beauty is described places it in direct opposition to the way in which love itself is described, for love *is* all these things, e.g., beautiful in part and in part ugly, etc., which beauty itself is not. Love is something separate from, yet intimately connected to, beauty/the good itself. Diotima connects this perfect vision of beauty to knowledge of virtue. For when one attains this vision and sees "... the heavenly beauty face to face ..." he becomes "... quickened with the true, and not the seeming, virtue – for it is virtue's self that quickens him, not virtue's semblance."[173] Diotima presents the ascent of the soul as a progression beginning with particular physical beauty and moving toward the universal idea of beauty. Waterfield notes the need for this ascent to be progressive.

> In Socrates' terms, the desire of a young man had to be aroused, even if the young man mistakenly took it at first to be physical, because that same desire could enable him to transcend the physical and pursue knowledge.[174]

The attainment of the final vision is the attainment of immortality. Diotima says,

> And when he has brought forth and reared this perfect virtue, he shall be called the friend of god, and if ever it is given to man to put on immortality, it shall be given to him.[175]

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[173] *Ibid.*, 211e-212a.
[174] Plato, Symposium, Robin Waterfield (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), p. xviii.
[175] Plato, *Symposium*, 212a.

This notion of friendship with the gods has been explicitly present since the speech of Eryximachus and was further developed by Aristophanes. Here, however, we have its ultimate dialectical manifestation in relation to conduct. Bloom says, "To see and perhaps become one with what is always is the philosopher's way of reaching immortality."[176] In the above text, however, the knowledge of virtue is not enough. The goal is not only, as Bloom says, "... [an] attainable goal as the completion of wisdom, which is a full grasp of beauty and immortality", but further, there must be conduct related to that wisdom; the perfect virtue must not only be "brought forth", but "reared".[177] The notion of the importance of proper conduct in relation to piety permeates the whole dialogue from Phaedrus to Alcibiades. Furthermore, Bloom says,

> It is true that the objects of the philosopher's contemplation are immortal, but Diotima wishes to make us forget that the philosopher is not. She says that the philosopher is immortal if any human being is. That is a very big if ... He knows that he will die, and this very contact with the things that are always provides the measure of the difference between them and him.[178]

We have seen, however, that the immortality of the soul was required if the object of love was to be attained, for one desires to possess the good

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[176] Bloom, 521.
[177] *Ibid.*
[178] *Ibid.*, 523.

eternally. Although not presented dialectically here in the *Symposium*, Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul is in fact crucial to the argument. Diotima was quite clear about the distinction between the immortality attained by physical procreation and the immortality attained by psychical procreation. The immortality attained by the bearer was presented as proportionate to the immortality of the begotten. Thus, Diotima leaves this matter open, and in the above text implies that another immortality is necessary, hence possible. If we are to see a continuity between the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* on this matter, the immortality of the soul must be maintained, and Bloom is probably incorrect in saying that the philosopher who attains such a vision dies.[179] The purpose of the salvific power of love is lost without the immortality of the soul. The notion of immortality, first introduced by Phaedrus, has now reached its pinnacle. Love is not merely the desire for the eternal possession of the good (which necessarily entails immortality), but further, it is that power which enables one to attain it. Love carries one up this ladder, binding together man and the divine.

Rosen is correct in saying that "Eros is not self-sufficient ... although extremely useful"; however, I believe that he is mistaken in saying that "... [love] is not quite indispensable". He continues,

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[179] The central topic of Plato's *Phaedo* concerns the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

> If one tried hard enough, one could apparently find a still better assistant. The specific excellence of Eros is as an assistant in the attempt to grasp immortality via the perception of beauty. Perhaps better assistants are available if one takes a different path.[180]

In light of what Phaedrus says, i.e., that love "... is the ancient source of our highest good ... without which neither cities nor citizens are capable of any great or noble work", Eros is certainly indispensable.[181] And if it is also true that "God with man does not mingle", then indeed we need love's help on our soul's journey.[182]

Diotima's ladder in the *Symposium* is akin to Socrates' line in the *Republic*, as I have argued. Each presents an anagogical progression of the soul toward knowledge of the good. Each begins with true opinion, which involves both a realization of ignorance and a desire to proceed from that ignorance, and also a knowing which is not knowing, i.e., correct opinion which cannot account for itself.[183] There are, however, interesting differences between the two. The first, and perhaps most apparent difference is that the line deals with the universal as such whereas the ladder is the line particularized in terms of beauty. However,

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[180] Rosen, pp. 276-7.
[181] Plato, *Symposium*, 178c-d.
[182] *Ibid.*, 202e.
[183] The prisoner in the cave who makes the philosophical turn is like the man who guesses the correct way to Larissa in that the prisoner knows there is something beyond the shadows and images, yet knows not what it is and thus cannot account for the generation of the shadows and images.

I believe that the most important difference between the line and the ladder, especially from a theological point of view, is that in the ladder there is help throughout this progression. Love, as a most powerful spirit, carries one up the ladder; love is the dynamic which in desire binds humanity and divinity, aiding the anagogical progression of the soul to its end. The *Symposium* is, in essence, an examination of the dynamic of love in relation to its anagogical function. The *Symposium* is a rhetorical and dialectical account of the nature of love and its power to aid humanity in its salvation. In this way, the *Symposium* is not only a more elaborate and lengthy, albeit narrowed, account of what appears in Book VI of the *Republic* as the line and cave analogies, but further, it provides help in this progression which the *Republic* explicitly lacks. The line and cave surpass the ladder in their universality, whereas the ladder, though particularized in terms of beauty, surpasses the line dynamically.

If we read Plato's cave analogy in the *Republic* carefully enough, however, we can see love, as it is rhetorically and dialectically examined in the *Symposium*, at work. Plato's cave analogy takes a dramatic turn when the prisoner is released from his bonds. From this point on, he seems to be aided by an unknown power. This someone or something is not the focus of the cave analogy and is almost overlooked but he/she/it is surely there. Someone has to free the prisoner, and if he is "...

compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light ...", he must be compelled to do these things by someone.[184] Socrates sometimes says that "we", i.e., the present company, are with the prisoner, as though Socrates and his interlocutors are doing this. At other times, it is this mysterious and non-particular someone. This someone "... compell[s] him to look at the light itself ..."[185] This someone, be it Socrates himself or someone else, seems to be a personification of love. Or perhaps, as I believe, it is love itself. Socrates describes this person's action in a way similar to his description of love's function in the *Symposium*. In the *Republic*, this implicit dynamic "... dragged [the prisoner] away ... by force, up the rough, steep path, and didn't let him go until he had dragged him into the sunlight ..."[186]

The dynamic is implicit in the *Republic*, and had one not read the *Symposium*, both the presence of the dynamic itself, and its functional significance, might be overlooked completely. The *Symposium* is an identification of that anagogical dynamic and an examination of its function, i.e., what it does and how it does it. One might think it possible, from a reading of the *Republic* alone, that such a progression of the soul is possible through one's own, unaided power. The *Symposium*,

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[184] Plato, *Republic*, 515c.
[185] *Ibid.*, 515d.
[186] *Ibid.*, 515e.

however, explicitly introduces the need for such a mediator between god and man and tells us how such a mediation works. The mysterious guide in the *Republic* is surely none but love itself, which encompasses and acts as a guide for all those who, as Eryximachus tells us, create and cultivate this love in others. The teacher, the physician, the dialectician, the poet, etc., as I argue following Eryximachus, insofar as they instill and cultivate this proper love are all manifestations of this love, are all playing the role of the rescuer and guide in the cave analogy. Although it is only implicit in the *Republic*, the major division of the line, i.e., the exit of the cave, is crossed only by the provocation and continued struggle of the guide. Help is required to ascend to the good. In a sense, the *Symposium* is an elaboration and rhetorical/dialectical working out of this implied but crucial element of the cave analogy.

Although we have seen Diotima retreat from several of the advances made by some of the previous speakers, e.g., denying the selflessness of love maintained by Phaedrus, she grounds the nature of love dialectically. The effect of this grounding is that it sets up further conditions whereby the definition of the nature and function of love can still progress. Tracing the continuity among the speeches up to its culmination in that of Socrates is at times difficult, for some speakers do not mention at all some of the great advances made by their predecessors, while others shrink back from some of these advances.

Again, as I say in the Introduction, this is not to say that the speeches are self-contained. The difficult whole-part relation is present both within each speech and within the dialogue as a whole of which each speech is a part. Once the nature of love is grounded by Diotima, many of the rhetorical claims made by the previous speakers not only carry more dialectical weight, but the advancement they do make becomes grounded, as we have seen. The dialectic is immanent in the rhetoric of the first five speeches, and progressively emerges throughout the dialogue.

Not only has the nature of love been dialectically established as a most powerful spirit between god and man, but the object of love, i.e., the universal good, the necessary condition of which is immortality, has also been dialectically grounded. Rosen is certainly correct in saying, "Diotima reconciles the human and the divine, and she does so on the premises of the previous speakers ..."[187] The unity of the dialogue is present within the continuity of the notions tackled by each speech. As with many of Plato's dialogues, the definitions of the nature and function of love are not complete, but the essence is established, by which the reader, through continued interaction with the text, is able to further this dialectical advancement. The dialectic "... contain(s) a seed whence new

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[187] Rosen, p. 276.

words grow up in new characters ..."[188] The reader of the *Symposium*, however, is given further help in his/her own progression through the speech that is finally to come. In the speech of Alcibiades we shall see the proper love at work on two levels. In one sense, we shall see how the lover (Socrates) acts toward his beloved (Alcibiades); and insofar as this conduct is demonstrated for us we can see love itself working through its personification in Socrates.

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[188] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 277a.

CHAPTER 3 — LOVE IS DEMONSTRATED

3.1 THE SPEECH OF ALCIBIADES

The nature and function of love have both been presented in their respective dialectical contexts. Love has been established as the desire for the eternal possession of the good, involving physical and psychical procreation leading to the salvation of the soul. In the speech of Alcibiades, this love is demonstrated by the behaviour of Socrates who expresses the two natures of love: love the emotion, and Love the being. Socrates is both *in* love and *acts* like Love, and his behaviour demonstrates his own spirituality and likeness to the daimonic nature of love. Socrates, as he himself admits, is in love with Alcibiades.[189] However, the lover/beloved relationship has come a long way since the speech of Phaedrus. What is present in this speech is the fulfillment of what had begun to emerge in the speech of Pausanias. We saw Pausanias maintaining the Athenian social norm by holding that the lover should teach his beloved virtue in exchange for sexual gratification. However, Pausanias made the distinction between the wicked and the noble lover. The noble lover is admirable in that the objects of his desire

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[189] "Then Socrates said, 'Agathon, do your best to protect me, for I have found my love for this fellow no trifling affair." *Symposium*, 213c.

are eternal, e.g., virtue and the soul, while the base lover is disgraceful in that the objects of his desire are mutable, e.g., the physical body and carnal pleasures. In his failure to let go of the physical act, Pausanias, while elevating the beloved in his desire for virtue, debases the lover who becomes wicked in his desire for the beloved's body. This tension is removed in the speech of Alcibiades wherein Socrates demonstrates the proper conduct between lover and beloved according to which the physical act is removed. The relationship, as we have seen, has been evolving into a teacher-student relationship wherein there is no sexual act.[190] Let us now see how Socrates' daimonic behaviour is described by his beloved Alcibiades.

Alcibiades' speech is both different from and like those that have gone before it. Unlike the others, which praise love, Alcibiades' speech praises Socrates. Thus, explicitly, his speech has a different topic. Implicitly, however, the speeches have the same topic, for both Socrates' nature and behaviour are akin to those of love, i.e., Socrates is presented as the personification of love in Alcibiades' speech. Alcibiades begins by saying that he "... shall speak the truth."[191] He says to Socrates before he

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[190] Because of the dialogue's focus on the traditional lover/beloved relationship, along with Plato's negative view toward the body, we do not explicitly have a discussion on the ramifications of the doctrine of love as it pertains to lovers who are equal, i.e., a lover/lover relationship. While it would seem that the physical act between equals would not be as problematic, there still prevails the argument that the mingling of minds between equals yields a greater and more immortal production.

[191] *Ibid.*, 214e.

begins, "If I say anything that is false, have the goodness to take me up short and say that there I am lying; for I will not lie if I can help it."[192] Socrates is silent throughout the speech, so the reader can only suppose that what Alcibiades says is true.

Alcibiades begins by describing Socrates' power over mankind. He compares Socrates to the satyrs, particularly Marsyas, saying that he both looks like and acts like them. Alcibiades says, "[Marsyas] indeed had the power to entrance mankind by means of his instruments ..."[193] He claims that those who can play the melodies of Marsyas on the flute possess the power to "excit[e] a ravishment" in others to the present day.[194] He says to Socrates, "You differ from him in one point only – that you produce the same effect with simple prose unaided by instruments."[195] Socrates does not use musical instruments to entrance others, yet he does use a *kind* of instrument. His instrument is the dialectical method.[196] While Alcibiades attributes this power to entrance

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[192] *Ibid.*, 214e-215a.
[193] *Ibid.*, 215c.
[194] *Ibid.*
[195] *Ibid.*
[196] This power Socrates wields is also spoken about by Meno in the dialogue bearing his name. He says, "Socrates, even before I met you they told me that in plain truth you are a perplexed man yourself and reduce others to perplexity. At this moment I feel you are exercising magic and witchcraft upon me and positively laying me under your spell until I am just a mass of helplessness. If I may be flippant, I think that not only in outward appearance but in other respects as well you are exactly like the flat stingray that one meets in the sea. Whenever anyone comes into contact with it, it numbs him, and that is the sort of thing that you seem to be doing to me now. My mind and my lips are literally numb, and I have nothing to reply to you ... If you behaved like this as a

to Socrates himself, Socrates separates himself from it. We recall that he tells Agathon, "... it is the truth ... whom you cannot contradict: Socrates you easily may."[197] The dialectic is an objective, not subjective, power, i.e., its power is independent of the user. Alcibiades illustrates the difference between Socrates' use of dialectic and the rhetoric of others, thus contrasting between Socrates and the other speakers of the *Symposium*:

> For example, when we hear any other person – quite an excellent orator, perhaps – pronouncing one of the usual discourses, no one, I venture to say, cares a jot; but so soon as we hear you, or your discourses in the mouth of another, - though such person be ever so poor a speaker, and whether the hearer be a woman or a man or a youngster – we are all astounded and entranced.[198]

Alcibiades illustrates the universal power that the dialectic has over all people, regardless of its user. The dialectic is objective in that no matter who relates the arguments and no matter who receives them, they are universally accessible. What exactly, however, is this power of entrancement that Socrates has through his use of the dialectic?

Socrates' words, though lacking in rhetorical flourish, are more powerful and inspirational than those even of Pericles. Alcibiades says, "For when I hear him I am worse than any wild fanatic; I find my heart

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foreigner in another country, you would most likely be arrested as a wizard." (Plato, *Meno*, 79e-80b).

[197] Plato, *Symposium*, 201c.

[198] *Ibid.*215d.

leaping and my tears gushing forth at the sound of his speech, and I see great numbers of other people having the same experience."[199] Socrates makes people think about virtue, thereby making them question the quality of their own lives and conduct. Alcibiades says,

> When I listened to Pericles and other skilled orators I thought them eloquent, but I never felt anything like this: my spirit was not left in a tumult and had not to complain of my being in the condition of a common slave, whereas the influence of our Marsyas here has often thrown me into such a state that I thought my life not worth living on these terms.[200]

Alcibiades illustrates Socrates' power as a teacher of virtue. Although Socrates not only claims that he is ignorant of what virtue is, but also even questions whether or not it is teachable, he has the ability to make others question the quality of their own lives. In the *Meno*, where Meno likens Socrates to a sting ray that paralyzes others, Socrates says that his ability to do so comes only as a result of his own perplexity. He says,

> As for myself, if the sting ray paralyzes others only through being paralyzed itself, then the comparison is just, but not otherwise. It isn't that, knowing the answers myself, I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself.[201]

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[199] *Ibid.*, 215d-e.
[200] *Ibid.*, 215e-216a.
[201] Plato, *Meno*, 79b-c.

As with love, Socrates does not possess wisdom. He does, however, possess true opinion and therefore he both realizes his own ignorance and is able to undertake the search for wisdom.

Socrates, through his use of dialectic, has the power, like love itself, to move one to virtuous action. He instills true opinion in others, making them question the quality of their lives. Once one begins to question virtue, and in loving and desiring wisdom becomes a philosopher, there is no turning back. Alcibiades says,

> What happens is that although I'm perfectly well aware of the inescapable force of his recommendations as to what I should do, yet as soon as I'm away from him, I get seduced by the adulteration of the masses. So I act like a runaway slave and keep away from him, and whenever I do see him, I feel ashamed because of the promises I made him.[202]

Although Alcibiades says that it is Socrates who makes him feel shame, it is the force of Socrates' arguments, which are independent of Socrates, that shame him. Once one realizes his/her lack of virtue and desires/loves it, the desire must be fulfilled, i.e., we desire completion, as Aristophanes says. The shame of Alcibiades is a reflection of the tension between proper and improper conduct, ignorance and knowledge, mortality and divinity. Shame is felt only when the philosophical turn is made, without which turn further ascent is impossible. Love, as both the

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[202] Plato, *Symposium*, 216b.

desire for the good and the spirit that elevates, brings one beyond shame toward salvation. Socrates uncovers and removes ignorance, thus making shame, and subsequently salvation, possible.

Pausanias has already made the distinction between proper and improper objects of desire. Eternal, unchanging objects such as the soul and the virtues, etc., he said are worthy of love, while mutable, fleeting things such as the youthful body, were said to be unworthy of love: for the quality and duration of the love depend upon the quality and duration of its object. Pausanias, however, fails to bring this distinction to fulfillment in relation to the proper conduct between lover and beloved, as we have seen. While the beloved is to be commended on his desire for virtue as he seeks it out in a lover, the lover is condemned in his desire for the body of the youth. Pausanias' distinction between the proper and improper object of love was sound; yet his portrayal of the proper conduction between lover and beloved was confused. The true and proper object of the love of the lover is not the body, for this would make him the lesser of the two. There is no dialectical need for the physical exchange. Rather, Socrates demonstrates the proper conduct between lover and beloved, which now comes to fulfillment as a teacher student relationship. This is demonstrated in his conduct toward Alcibiades.

Alcibiades speaks of Socrates' indifference to physical beauty. He says, "I tell you, all the beauty a man may have is nothing to him; he

despises it more than any of you can believe ..."[203] The object of Socrates' desire, as a philosopher, is beyond mere physical beauty. Alcibiades tells of how he tried to seduce Socrates, reversing the traditional roles of lover and beloved. Socrates, however, on a number of occasions refused his advances, thereby demonstrating his control over his passions, i.e., he exhibits temperance, which, not incidentally, Agathon had identified as love itself.[204] Alcibiades believes himself to have found virtue in Socrates and wishes that Socrates teach him in exchange for sexual gratification. This is a concrete example of the confused formula that Pausanias presents for proper conduct in such a relationship. Alcibiades tells Socrates,

> I find it sheer folly not to gratify you in this as in any other need you may have of either my property or that of my friends. To me nothing is more important than the attainment of the highest possible excellence, and in this aim I believe I can find no nobler ally than you.[205]

Alcibiades' proposal is refused by Socrates on two grounds. First, Socrates claims that he has nothing to offer Alcibiades. Socrates was different from the sophists of his day in that he accepted no fee for his

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[203] *Ibid.*, 216d.
[204] While love is not identical to temperance, for love is not a virtue, they certainly have much in common as we have seen.
[205] *Ibid.*, 218.

teaching, for he believed that he had nothing to teach.[206] In Plato's dialogues, Socrates does not often present his companions with lengthy discourses on subjects, but rather, he asks them questions to which, as he claims in the *Meno*, he himself does not know the answers. Socrates speaks at length about his ignorance and reputed wisdom in the *Apology*. Socrates' true wisdom lies in his realization of his own ignorance. This puts him far ahead of others, about whom he speaks in the *Apology*, and who claim to know that which they do not:

> It is only too likely that neither of us has any knowledge to boast of, but he thinks that he knows something which he does not know, whereas I am quite conscious of my ignorance. At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he is to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know.[207]

For this reason Socrates refuses Alcibiades' advances: he claims that he has no knowledge of virtue to offer him. The benefit of having Socrates as a teacher lies in his ability to reveal one's ignorance, from which alone one can begin to move toward wisdom. Also interesting to note in the *Apology*, is Socrates' referral to his habit of argumentation as his

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[206] "The fact is that there is nothing in any of these charges, and if you have heard anyone say that I try to educate people and charge a fee, there is no truth in that either. I wish that there were, because I think that it is a fine thing if a man is qualified to teach ..." Plato, *Apology* 19d-e. Also see 31c.
[207] *Ibid.*, 21d.

"religious duty".[208] He has a duty to reveal ignorance and thus like love, unites god and man. For only in recognition of our own ignorance can we desire wisdom and virtue and thus begin to remedy that deficiency.

Before we move to the second reason why Socrates refuses Alcibiades' advances, we shall look first at the greater insight we now have in relation to the problem raised by Pausanias' presentation of the proper objects of love: namely, if the desires of the lover are elevated beyond the physical, then what does he/she receive in his exchange with the beloved? This question can be raised in this context only in terms of the traditional lover/beloved relationship, which again, is now a teacher/student relationship. Plato does not explicitly discuss the ramifications of his theory of love in terms of lovers who are equal physically and psychically, e.g., a lover/lover relationship. Conceivably, each would benefit physically and psychically from the other. However, the relationship between a man/woman and a youth is different in that the youth has no knowledge of virtue to give.[209] In addition to the fact that love involves self-sacrifice, as Phaedrus has told us, and thereby the

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[208] " This duty I have accepted, as I said, in obedience to God's commands given in oracles and dreams and in every other way that any other divine dispensation has ever impressed a duty upon man." *Apology*, 33c. See also *Apology*, 21e and 35d.

[209] In fact, Socrates himself claims to have no knowledge to give to others, yet one benefits from his dialectical discussion in the realization of his/her own ignorance and ability to move from it toward knowledge. Thus, the student's relationship to such a person is indeed psychically beneficial.

lover need not receive compensation, Eryximachus has done much more to solve this problem of inequality for us.

We recall that god loves the creation and cultivation of the proper love wherever it is done. Insofar as one cultivates this love and conducts him/herself properly, he/she is pious and achieves immortality. Socrates, as a dialectician and teacher, instills in others the desire for virtue, thus cultivating the proper love; i.e., he creates and cultivates the attraction of people toward worthy objects. Thus, insofar as he reveals the ignorance of others and moves them toward virtue, he is pious and contributes to his salvation as well as that of the interlocutor(s). In Alcibiades' speech we have this doctrine of piety and salvation, introduced by Eryximachus, concretized by Socrates' actions. It is important to note as well that Socrates does not speak with others about virtue in order to achieve salvation himself. Rather, he sees it as his religious duty to do so. He says in the *Apology*,

> ... I ... go about seeking and searching in obedience to the divine command, if I think that anyone is wise, whether citizen or stranger, and when I think that any person is not wise, I try to help the cause of God by proving that he is not. This occupation has kept me too busy to do much else in politics or in my own affairs. In fact, my service to God has reduced me to extreme poverty.[210]

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[210] *Ibid.*, 23b.

This is evidence against the claim that Socrates is selfish, using others to attain his own salvation. Ruprecht suggests,

> [Perhaps Socrates] *uses* beauty, drinks it to the dregs, then discards it when demands are made of his particular form of beauty, in turn. Naussbaum accuses him of just this kind of hardness – a sort of erotic brittleness and frigidity – and of being a heartbreaker to boot. He means to *use eros*, to get himself where he really wants to go, alone – up the divine ladder toward the beatific vision of the beautiful.[211]

No view could be further from the truth on this matter. Socrates, as he says in the *Apology*, spent his life making others realize their own ignorance on matters of virtue. He instills them with true opinion and love of philosophy so that they might ascend the ladder with him. At one point in the *Apology*, Socrates even refers to himself as a "gift of God", again putting him in a direct relation to love itself.[212] Love is indeed a gift of God, a spirit of grace which enables man to achieve salvation; and Socrates too, insofar as he is a daimonic personification of love, possessing true opinion and instilling it in others, leads others toward salvation as well. I agree with Waterfield on this matter, who writes,

> It seems likely that Socrates exploited the homoerotic nature of the Athenian circle within which he moved for his own ends. If he played the lover and pursued young men, he was trying to make them consummate a lifelong affair with philosophy, not with

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[211] Ruprecht, p. 59.
[212] Plato, *Apology*, 30d-e.

> himself; he turned the 'patronage' of the lover ... to educational purposes.[213]

Secondly, Socrates refuses the advances of Alcibiades because he has no desire for physical bodies. The beauty of the soul by far outshines the beauty of the body. Socrates says to Alcibiades,

> ... if what you say of me is the actual truth, and there is a certain power in me that could help you to be better; ... then what a stupendous beauty you must see in me, vastly superior to your comeliness.[214]

Socrates says that in his attempt to exchange his body for that which he believes Socrates' soul to possess, Alcibiades is "... trying to get genuine in return for reputed beauties, ... real 'gold for bronze.' "[215] Pausanias' early distinction between the worthy and the unworthy objects of love is here concretized in the actions of Socrates. Socrates resists Alcibiades' seduction with contempt. If love is to be eternal and unchanging, so too must be its object. Socrates desires the eternal and thus is not in love with physical beauty. Therefore, the sexual exchange encouraged by Pausanias is severed from the now teacher/student relationship. Waterfield agrees with this portrayal of Socrates' behaviour:

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[213] Waterfield, p. xvii.
[214] Plato, *Symposium*, 218d-e.
[215] *Ibid.*, 218e-219a.

> The master – pupil relationship in philosophical training is erotic in that the master embodies the wisdom the pupil desires; but it is a mistake to downgrade this eroticism and have sex with your teacher.[216]

He continues,

> In all this it is never far from the surface that the Greek word *philosophia* means 'love of wisdom'. For those Greeks who took it seriously, philosophy was more than higher education: it was a way of life and a means to salvation. It was therefore to be pursued passionately, with lifelong devotion ...[217]

The teacher has salvation as the end in mind for both himself and the student. Socrates describes this relation in the *Phaedrus*. He says,

> The dialectician selects the soul of the right type, and in it he plants and sows his words founded on knowledge, words which can defend both themselves and him who planted them, words which instead of remaining barren contain a seed whence new words grow up in new characters, whereby the seed is vouchsafed immortality, and its possessor the fullest measure of blessedness that man can attain unto.[218]

The progressing notion of the conduct between lover and beloved has now reached its dialectical completion. Pausanias' distinction between the noble and base objects of love is maintained and developed, while his idea of the conduct between lover and beloved has evolved into the proper idea of conduct concretized in Socrates' behaviour.

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[216] Waterfield, p. xviii.
[217] *Ibid.*
[218] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 276e-277a.

This "lofty disdain" Socrates has for the physical is further illustrated by Alcibiades in his account of Socrates' heroic actions in the Athenian military.[219] Socrates' super-human ability to transcend his physical body is often presented in contrast to others' attachment to their bodies. Socrates is able to drink to great extents and to resist getting drunk, for he is never affected in the least, while others pass out around him. Alcibiades says, "no man has ever yet seen Socrates drunk."[220] On his military campaigns, Socrates performed "many marvelous feats" of great physical stamina and fortitude.[221] During the winters, the other soldiers, including Alcibiades, took great care to wrap themselves up warmly and fill their shoes with extra insulation, while Socrates "... walked out in [the same] weather, clad in just such a coat as he was always wont to wear, and he made his way more easily over the ice unshod than the rest of [us] did in our shoes."[222] Socrates' ability to walk barefoot over the same ice as the others walked wearing insulated shoes demonstrates his transcendence of body over and above other men. Socrates' trances, especially the one which occurs at the beginning of the dialogue thereby causing his delay, also demonstrate his

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[219] Plato, *Symposium*, 219c.
[220] *Ibid.*, 220a. The evening eventually erupts into a drinking party, at the end of which (and at the end of the dialogue), Socrates, after having drank a lot himself, puts the others who have passed out to bed.
[221] *Ibid.*
[222] *Ibid.*, 202b.

transcendence of body and complete immersion into matters of the soul. Alcibiades relates the occurrence of such a trance that happened on a military expedition. Socrates stood in one place from dawn one day until dawn the next day immersed in thought while his companions stayed outside, observing him to see how long he would remain standing. When dawn broke the next day, he simply "walked away."[223] Again, this concretizes Socrates', the noble lover's, concern with matters of the soul, over and above his own body and indeed the whole physical realm. Socrates also shows his courage in battle, saving the life of Alcibiades by refusing to leave him. He further shows his hatred of "... any sort of honour that is the envied prize of the crowd" by refusing the prize for valour which he said should go to Alcibiades.[224]

Alcibiades continues,

> There are many more quite wonderful things that one could find to praise in Socrates: but although there would probably be as much to say about any other one of his habits, I select his unlikeness to anybody else ... as calling for our greatest wonder.[225]

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[223] *Ibid.*, 220d. We might assume that Socrates stood in that place until he had come to the conclusion about that which he was thinking. His companions are aware of this habit of his. When he finally arrives at Agathon's house, Agathon says, "Here you are, Socrates. Come and sit next to me; I want to share this great thought that's just struck you in the porch next door. I'm sure that you must have mastered it, or you'd still be standing there." *Ibid.*, 175c-d.

[224] *Ibid.*, 216e.

[225] *Ibid.*, 221c.

Again, Alcibiades praises Socrates in contrast to others. He is strange and unique among men, i.e., a daimon amongst humanity. Socrates' strength of mind and body are presented by Alcibiades as a resistance to external forces, such as the cold, physical fatigue, the fear of death, or the temptation of Alcibiades himself.[226] Socrates is indifferent to the particular and the material. He has the power to detach himself from bodily matters and exist within. The brilliance of Socrates' body is its capacity to endure and surmount and even exclude bodily sensation and external causes. Thus, while Diotima (and Plato in general), presents the body as a hindrance toward the pursuit of the universal, here the body is given a more positive emphasis. The body has the power not to be affected by the infinite particulars, thus allowing the soul to pursue the universal.

Furthermore, Socrates, through his use of the dialectic, inspires this love of the universal good in others. He is the prime example of the good lover in his possession of true opinion, i.e., the realization of his own ignorance, and his desire to possess the eternal good, seeking it out in eternal things. In addition to this, Socrates cultivates the same desire in others; i.e., he instigates the same attraction toward the proper and eternal objects of love. Insofar as he and others cultivate this love, they

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[226] This is a pre-stoical manifestation of the inward shift of the infinite will as the infinite power to resist external causes.

win the favour of god, and thus, immortality, the necessary but not sufficient condition whereby the eternal good can be attained.

Socrates is the model for what love should be of, and for how one should conduct oneself in accordance with that love. Furthermore, Socrates, as the personification of Love the spirit, shows how love functions. Socrates is indeed a "gift from god", and like love itself, he too manifests a kind of grace, whereby through his use of dialectic and conversation, he elevates others with him out of the cave toward the eternal good that is humanity's completion and salvation. Alcibiades believes this as well.

> [Socrates' speeches] ... are the only speeches which have any sense in them; and secondly, that none are so divine, so rich in images of virtue, so largely – nay, so completely – intent on all things proper for the study of such as would attain both grace and worth.[227]

Chapter 1 presented us with the notion of love. Chapter 2 grounded the nature and function of this spirit in dialectical form. In Chapter 3, we now have this love demonstrated for us, concretized in the behaviour and conduct of him who was indeed, true love personified.

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[227] *Ibid.*, 222a.

CONCLUSION

In a word, the unity of the Plato's *Symposium* is its continuity. I proposed at the beginning of this work that the unity of the *Symposium* would be present at the end, for the demonstration of a continuity is a progressive affair. What I believe to be the most important threads of continuity within the *Symposium* have been traced in this work from their rhetorical beginnings to their respective dialectical completions. Each speech, as I have shown, contributes to the emergence of the nature and function of love.

Love has emerged throughout the progression of the dialogue as the dynamic mediator between god and man, a mediator who is necessary for the attainment of salvation. Phaedrus introduces the idea that love is intrinsically related to conduct, moving one to act virtuously even when he/she lacks knowledge of virtue. This contribution anticipates the later explicit identification of love with true opinion by Diotima. Phaedrus also introduces right from the beginning the important notion of immortality, which is dialectically realized by Diotima to be a necessary condition for love itself. Pausanias elaborates on this notion of conduct, suggesting that the relationship between lover and beloved be based upon that which is eternal, i.e., that the quality of love is dependent upon the quality of its object. Although confused in the

sense that the lover is placed below the beloved in his desire for the beloved's body, as we have seen, the doctrine of conduct introduced by Pausanias makes acute the question of the proper object of love. Eryximachus universalizes the notion of attraction introduced by Pausanias in his holding that all things, not merely human beings, exhibit this force. Using the analogy of medicine, he claims that some attractions are good, thus creating healthy states, while others are bad, yielding sickness. More importantly, however, Eryximachus is the first explicitly to place love between humanity and divinity. Love is that intermediate power which makes possible communion between human beings and god. Furthermore, Eryximachus claims that the cultivation of the proper love, wherever it occurs, contributes to the salvation of the cultivator by promoting that which God loves. In the speech of Aristophanes, the notion of desire becomes acute, in particular, the desire for completion. The moral of his myth is that human beings are incomplete as a result of our past impiety. Love is the desire for the completion that we once had and the mode through which we can attain salvation. The speech of Agathon marks the transition from rhetoric to dialectic. Agathon reveals the importance of definition, and although he himself fails to employ a proper method of definition, he sets the stage for the speech of Socrates wherein the dialectical method takes hold to ground the previous rhetorical notions of love.

After his initial questioning of Agathon, whereby Socrates proves that love is not a god, Socrates recounts his past discussions with Diotima. Through dialectical reasoning, Diotima arrives at the definition of love as a spirit between God and man, possessing the qualities of both. As such, love is the perfect mediator between God and man since "... God with man does not mingle."[228] Love, as a spiritual being, both brings humanity to God and God to humanity. Furthermore, love, as desire, is dialectically established to be the desire for the eternal possession of the good. In addition to Diotima's definition of the nature and function of love, the speech relates the anagogical progression of the soul in terms of a ladder, similar to Plato's line in the *Republic*. One proceeds from the desire for a particular manifestation of beauty onward to the desire for the form of beauty itself. Love is that great power which helps one ascend this ladder, and upon reaching its summit one achieves immortality, which is itself a condition for the possibility of loving and attaining the good.

The speech of Alcibiades shows this perfect love in action through the conduct of Socrates, who himself is love personified. Alcibiades' speech emends Pausanias' confused doctrine of conduct in accordance with love: Socrates' concern is with the universal only and thus the

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[228] Plato, *Symposium*, 203.

desire for the physical drops out of the picture. Socrates is the highest example of one who creates and cultivates the proper love in accordance with Eryximachus' doctrine of attraction. Thus, insofar as Socrates inspires his beloveds with desire for the good, his is pious and thus contributes to his own salvation as well as that of the beloved.

In taking the whole of the dialogue as a progressing dialectic, one achieves a much fuller account of the nature and function of love. Furthermore, Plato's doctrine of love is extremely important to his thought as a whole. Plato suggests in the *Symposium* that one cannot attain the good through one's own rational activity, whereas in the *Republic*, there is no explicit dynamic that brings one up the line. There is help in the *Symposium* in love, a mediating spirit without which salvation is impossible. St. Augustine criticizes the Platonists, claiming that they were "... bloated with the most outrageous pride ..."[229], in their belief that they could attain the good through their own rational activity. Augustine says that the Platonists "... see the goal that they must reach, but cannot see the road by which they are to reach it ..."[230] The *Symposium* of Plato separates Plato from this criticism of the Neo-Platonists in that for Plato, spiritual help is needed to reach the good. The *Symposium*, therefore, is a crucial dialogue not only in relation to

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[229] Augustine, Confessions. R. S. Pine-Coffin (trans.) (England: Penguin Group, 1961), p. 144.

Plato's doctrine of love, but more importantly, because love is necessary for salvation, the dialogue is necessarily tied to Plato's all-important line and cave analogies in the *Republic*, as well as to many of his other works.

Love itself is a dynamic, and each of the speeches of the *Symposium* brings this out in its own way. The speeches dialectically culminate in that of Socrates which grounds and emends the rhetorical framework that precedes it. The speeches together show that salvation is a progression from lack to completion, and the mediating dynamic of love aids in the fulfillment of humanity giving rise to immortality. In reading the *Symposium* as a progressing dialectic, seeing each speech as an integral part of the unfolding spiritual nature and salvific function of love, we can formulate a doctrine that is complete and of exceeding importance to Plato's thought as a whole. The *Symposium*, therefore, is significant for the process of unifying Plato's ideas as they appear throughout the whole Platonic corpus, since its doctrine stands in essential relation to the other dialogues, in particular to the *Republic*. So too within the *Symposium* itself unity must be kept in mind as one progresses through the dialogue, understanding how each speech of the *Symposium* contributes to the revelation of the unity of that which itself unifies, namely love.

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[230] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

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